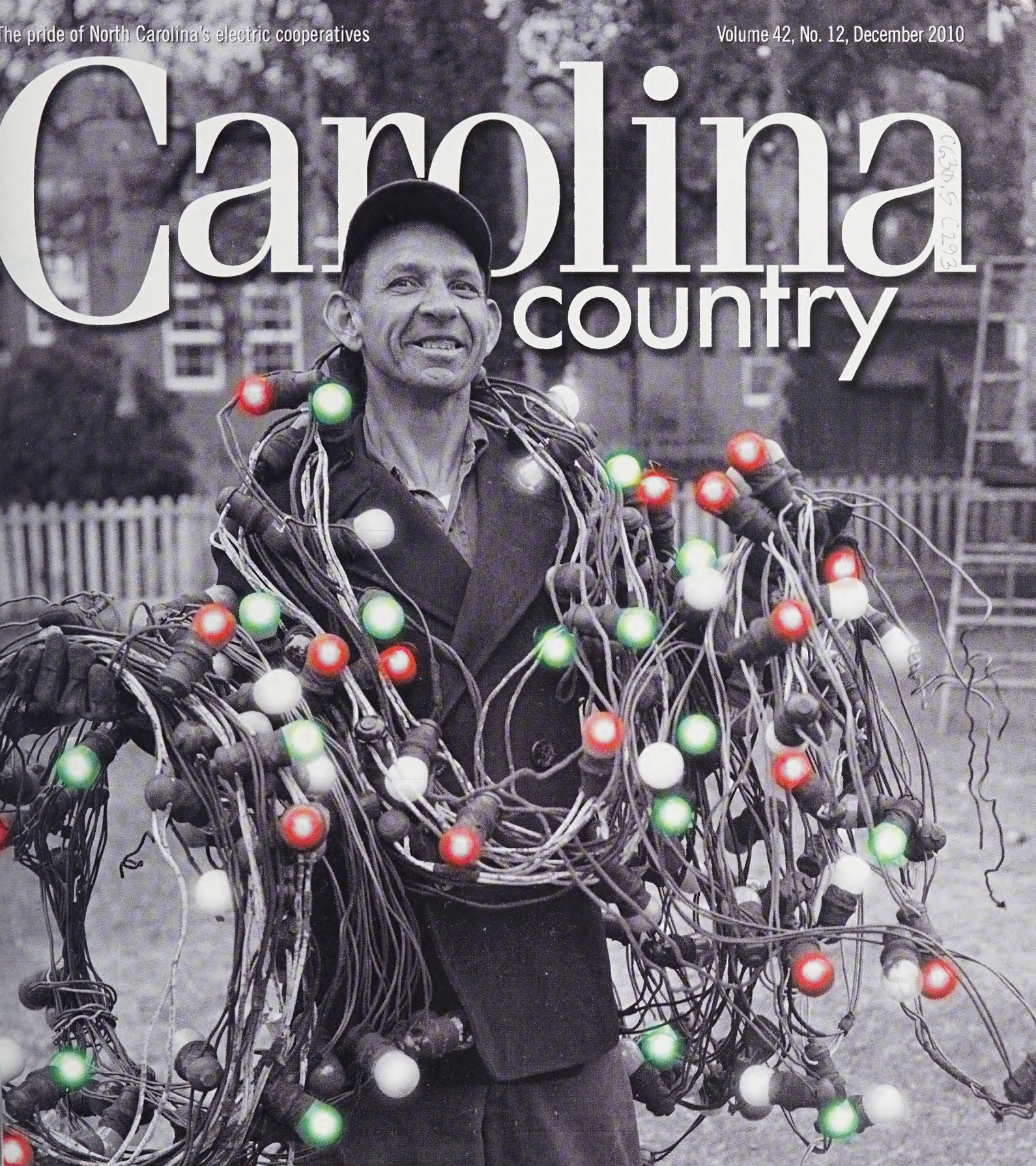
The pride of North Carolina's electric cooperatives

Volume 42, No. 12, December 2010

Carolina country



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INSIDE:

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Time is running out. Geological experts predict the world's supply of tantalizing tanzanite will disappear in a matter of just a few years. Maybe sooner. High-end retailers are raising prices on this rare stone. And gem dealers are in a mad scramble to secure their claim before it's too late. Let them scramble.

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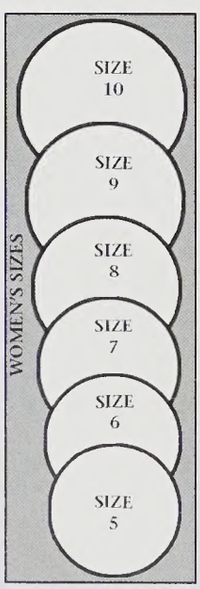

USING THE RING SIZE CHART
Place one of her rings on top of one of the circle diagrams. Her ring size is the circle that matches the inside diameter of the ring diagram. If her ring falls between sizes, order the next larger size.

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Smart Luxuries—Surprising Prices

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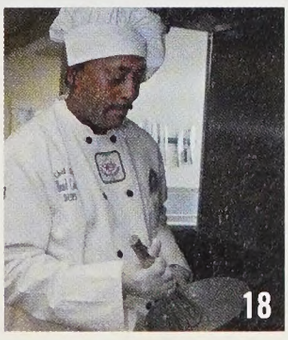
ON THE COVER

North Carolina legend Hugh Morton (page 32) shot this photo in 1958, early in his career in Wilmington, his hometown. It shows Arthur Sandlin with Christmas lights, probably used for the "World's Largest Living Christmas Tree" in Wilmington that year. We added the color. (Photograph by Hugh Morton, copyright 2010, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina Library at Chapel Hill.)



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Using the ground

We have had a geothermal heat pump for the past 10-plus years and saved about 30 percent on our all-electric energy bill with a payback time of about nine years. Each summer the heat pump dumps what can be utilized of the house heat into the water heater before it uses the ground as its heat dump. This should be especially championed in our part of the country. Our summer and winter conditions are especially well suited to using our ground as a heat sink and heat source.

Jim Fyfe

Right on time

In 1979, I started a new job in Washington, N.C., before my family was able to move with me. I lived in an apartment alone for several months. During one of those months I was only in the apartment for one day. When I received the electric bill it was around $38. I called the electric utility and complained. The man asked what was using electricity, and we found that the refrigerator and the hot water heater were the only things running during the month. He suggested that I purchase a timer. He said that in most cases the timer will pay for itself in 30 days. I had the timer installed, and the next bill was in the $18 range. Since that time I have installed a timer in both of our homes. Some timers come with one set of stops and other brands with two sets. I have mine set to start at 5 a.m. and go off about 8 a.m., and go on again 6 p.m. and go off at 7:30 p.m. You can press a button to turn it on at any time if you need additional hot water. This saves a tremendous amount of electricity.

Dick Phelan

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Hunter at the fair

Our 2-year-old grandson, Hunter, just loves the pictures in Carolina Country. We look at them all month. We took him to the Cleveland County Fair, and as you can see, his favorite things were the "big tractors."

Ann MacKenzie, Gastonia, Rutherford EMC

Late summer in Roseboro

I took this picture the day after my first grandson, Dylan Joshua Harris, was born. At the time I thought the ready-to-harvest corn behind it wasn't very pretty, but when the picture came out, I liked it. It was about 8 a.m. on a hot summer day. You can see the pretty wild vines with tiny red flowers running all over the corn with a morning mist hanging over the field. I feel this picture shows what the rural countryside of southeastern North Carolina looks like, while telling the story of my grandson's birth at the same time.

Debbie Jackson, Roseboro

Memories of Sleepy Hollow

I was delighted to see a photo and letter about the covered bridge that crosses the Watauga River off Hwy. 105 about eight miles from Boone at Sleepy Hollow.

The bridge was built during the summer of 1971 by my father, Frank Reynolds. While the bridge was being constructed, those of us living in Sleepy Hollow at the time used a temporary low-water bridge to cross the river. I was particularly interested in the water level that summer, hoping it would stay low, because I was expecting my second child, and the only other place nearby to cross the river was a footbridge a little farther upstream. Happily, my son was born three weeks after the covered bridge was completed.

Here is a photo of the Sleepy Hollow covered bridge taken in 1993.

Kathy Jackson, Boone

Christmas Eve in Charleston

This was the sunset in Charleston on Christmas Eve, where we decided to spend an unconventional holiday season together. It was a bit chilly but absolutely beautiful, and we had the beach all to ourselves.

Michael and Steph, Mount Pleasant

Kids say the darnedest things!

During one Christmas season many years ago, my youngest son, Philip, wanted to know what an "imbecile" was. I explained to him that an imbecile is someone who doesn't have all his wits. He solemnly looked at me and said, "No, that's not right. Jesus is not an imbecile." I asked what he was talking about and he answered, "That song we sing, 'Silent Night,' when we say 'round on virgin mother and child, holy imbecile tender and mild.' That calls Jesus an imbecile, and he can't be!"

Wanda Batten, Selma, Wake EMC

When one of my grandsons was in the first grade at school, his mom asked him when he got home from school what he had for lunch. He said, "I think we had something called Dirty Old Men." His mom thought about it for a few seconds and said, "Did you have Sloppy Joe's?" And he said, "Oh yes, that's what we had."

My daughter made deviled eggs one day for lunch. Her grandson really liked them. The next day he said, "Nanna, will you make me some more evil eggs?"

Jettie Love, Wilkesboro

I remember my 4-year-old sister singing the words from that old hymn "At Calvary" as "There my bird and soul found liberty," instead of the correct words "burdened soul."

Susan L. Stepputtis, Emerald Isle, Carteret-Craven Electric

When the wedding march began at my cousin's wedding rehearsal, my 8-year-old daughter leaned over and whispered to my 6-year-old daughter, "When you see her, sing 'Here comes the bride, all dressed and wide.'"

Kelly Cornett

Our family has always enjoyed singing together, and one afternoon as we were driving along in the car we were singing a song the children had learned in Sunday school, "Zacchaeus Was a Wee Little Man." After we finished the song, my then 4-year old son, Jeff, asked, "Mom, what is a despicable tree?" The line goes," Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he. He climbed up in a sycamore tree, for the Lord he wanted to see."

Carla Spruill, Creswell, Tideland EMC

Last summer, my then 3-year old granddaughter, Hailey, was chattering to her tired and worn out PaPa as he was watching the evening news. His reply to her constant chatter was an occasional, "um huh," "yeah," "um huh" as he listened to the newscaster. Frustrated, Hailey walked into the kitchen where I was preparing dinner. She looked up to me and adamantly stated, "GG, PaPa doesn't buy attention." I thought for a second, then smiled and said, "Do you mean PaPa doesn't pay attention?" "Yes", she said, "PaPa doesn't pay attention."

Paula Grissom, Kittrell, Wake EMC

Electric Cooperatives & 4-H Teaming Up for Citizenship

The 14th Annual EMC State 4-H Clover Classic golf tournament in October raised more than $14,800 for the 4-H Citizenship North Carolina Focus. The funds benefit the annual citizenship experience for 4-H'ers across North Carolina.

Over 95 EMC golfers participated at the Lonnie Poole Golf Course and at the awards reception held at the State Club on Centennial campus, North Carolina State University. The tournament was a culmination of seven regional tournaments jointly organized by seven 4-H programs and electric cooperatives. The money raised in local golf tournaments helps to fund county 4-H programs such as intra-state exchanges, scholarships for camp and other programs.

This year's President's Cup—endowed through the Dr. Mike Davis Family Fund for 4-H Innovation and Excellence—went to Halifax EMC for its outstanding partnership with Halifax County 4-H. The first Halifax 4-H Superball Golf Tournament was held in 1990 and Halifax EMC played a vital role in getting the tournament off the ground. During its 21 years, the tournament has raised close to $90,000, which has been vital for operating the Halifax 4-H Rural Life Center day camping program. Halifax EMC also opens its Enfield office for monthly 4-H meetings, and last year its Operation Round-Up program awarded 4-H $2,700 towards the Embryology School Enrichment Program.

Halifax EMC for more than 20 years has supported the development of the 4-H Rural Life Center in Halifax County and its camp program.

Joe Long, director of the 4-H Rural Life Center, said, "Halifax EMC has been one of the major supporters of the 4-H Rural Life Center and the Halifax County 4-H program for over twenty years. They have led the way on fundraising events and helped support the efforts of many young people in our communities to become positive and contributing members of society.

"We are grateful for the long-time support Halifax EMC has given to 4-H in Halifax County," said Kathleen Fleming 4-H agent in Halifax County. ☘

EMC State 4-H Clover Classic

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The North Carolina 4-H Youth Development program serves over 241,000 youth, ages 5-19, in North Carolina and utilizes over 21,000 adult and youth volunteers annually. Local 4-H programs are supported with resources from the Cooperative Extension Service within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina State University and North Carolina A & T State University. 4-H has offices in all 100 counties plus the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation. For more information about the 4-H Youth Development Program, contact your local Cooperative Extension office or the state 4-H office at (919) 515-3242. Mailing address: NCSU Box 7606, Raleigh, NC, 27695-7606.

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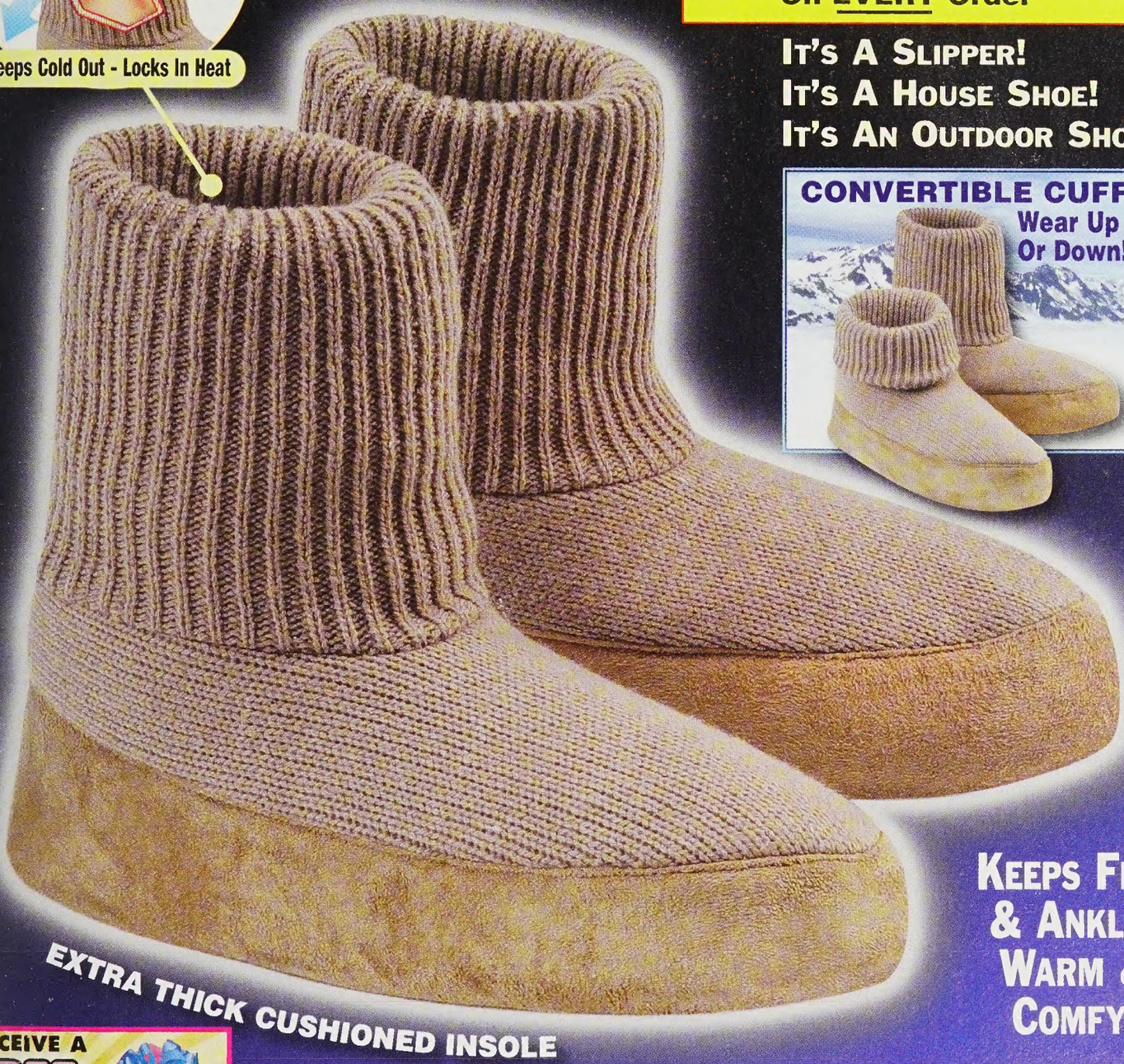

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Heating cost hikes are expected to moderate this winter

Slightly warmer weather and adequate fuel inventories could add up to only moderate increases in the costs of heating homes this winter.

Analysts at the U.S. Energy Information Administration released their latest seasonal forecast in October. The Short-Term Energy and Winter Fuels Outlook examined fuel cost projections and long-range weather forecasts for the Oct.1 to March 31 period.

Officials from the Department of Energy unit relied upon heating degree day projections from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. While the Northeast is expected to be about 5 percent colder than last winter, the South is projected to be 15 percent warmer. Overall, NOAA expects the lower 48 states to be 3 percent warmer over the six-month heating period compared to October 2009 through March 2010.

"Average household expenditures for space-heating fuels will total $986 this winter," said EIA in its published report. Analysts are projecting higher costs for all fuels with the exception of electricity, which is expected to be about 2 percent below last winter's levels.

—Derrill Holly, Electric Co-op Today

Highlights of this year's outlook

- **Natural Gas:** About 52 percent of U.S. households depend upon natural gas as the primary heating source. Costs are expected to be about 4 percent higher than last winter.
- **Heating Oil:** As the primary heating source of 7 percent of U.S. households, prices are projected to rise about 22 cents per gallon over last winter's levels. That means the overall average cost will be about $220 more than last winter.
- **Propane:** Households heating primarily with propane are expected to spend an average of $136 more this winter. That means the 6 percent of U.S. households relying on the fuel will see an 8 percent increase in heating costs.
- **Electricity:** A 4 percent decline in consumption is expected to offset a 2 percent increase in prices. This will lead to an overall cost reduction of 2 percent for the 37 percent of U.S. households that use electricity as their primary source of space heating.

Co-ops gave nearly $600,000 to teachers this year

In November, North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperatives awarded Bright Ideas education grants to deserving teachers across the state. The grants make possible innovative, classroom-based projects that would otherwise go unfunded. This year, the cooperatives will contribute nearly $600,000 to the Bright Ideas program.

Any certified K–12 North Carolina teacher may apply for a grant of up to $2,000 to be used for creative projects in their classroom. The Bright Ideas program began 17 school years ago with the purpose of helping teachers who were funding classroom-based projects out of their own pockets and has since provided funding for more than 6,500 projects.

"North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperatives are committed to bettering the communities we serve and there is no better way than through educating our youth," said Morgan Genty, Bright Ideas coordinator for North Carolina's Association of Electric Cooperatives. "Bright Ideas is the only grant program in our state exclusively for North Carolina teachers and we are proud to support this worthy cause for the 17th school year."

Since the program's inception in 1994, North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperatives have awarded more than $7.1 million to N.C. teachers. The Bright Ideas program has reached more than 1.2 million North Carolina students in all subjects including math, reading, science and technology, music and the arts.

Erin Nelson's students at Triangle Day School, Durham, earned a grant for her "Bring Science to Life" project, awarded by Piedmont EMC.

Try This!

Keep electronics from haunting your electric bills

By Brian Sloboda

As children, most of us were told to turn off the TV to keep from wasting energy when no one was in the room. But with today's televisions, "off" doesn't really mean off anymore.

In fact, several devices inside your home are commonly referred to as "parasitic loads," "phantom loads," or "energy vampires"—consuming electricity even when switched off. Most TVs today slowly sip electricity while waiting for someone to press the "on" button, and also use energy to remember channel lineups, language preferences, and the time. VCRs, DVD players, DVRs and cable or satellite boxes use energy when we think they're turned off.

Studies show that in an average home, 5 percent to 8 percent of electricity consumption stems from phantom loads. To put that in perspective, the average North American household consumes roughly 10,800 kilowatt-hours (kwh) of electricity per year. If you estimate that 6.5 percent of your total electricity consumption comes from phantom loads, the amount drained equals about 700 kwh annually—or $70 every year.

Items OK to leave plugged in

Microwave ovens and alarm clocks, which use relatively small amounts of standby power, are acceptable to leave plugged in. A digital video recorder (DVR) uses a fairly significant amount of power when turned off, but if you record programs frequently you will want to leave it plugged in.

You don't have to worry about unplugging items with mechanical on/off switches, such as lamps, hair dryers, or small kitchen appliances like toasters or mixers—they don't draw any power when turned off.

Energy vampires to slay

Household electronics like personal computers, monitors, printers, speakers, stereos, DVD and video game players, and cell phone chargers are good candidates for power strips. Not only do power strips protect sensitive electronic components from power surges, you can quickly turn off several items at once. (Routers and modems also can be plugged into power strips, although they take longer to reactivate.)

Smart strips can be inexpensive solution

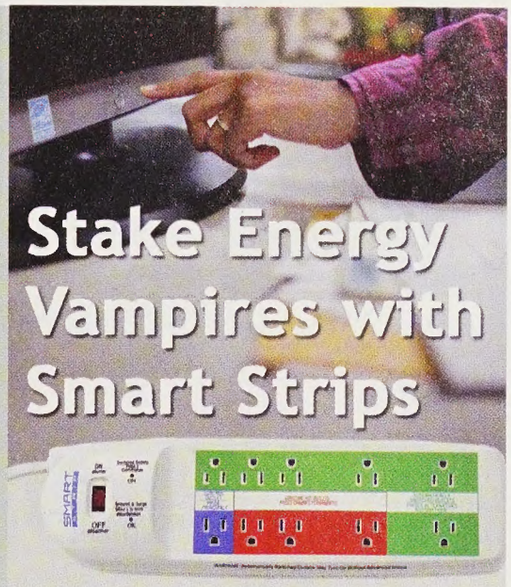
Power strips, however, are often hidden behind entertainment centers or desks and forgotten. A better solution may be "smart strips."

Most smart strips feature three outlet colors, each with a unique task. The blue outlet serves as a control plug, and is ideal for a heavily used device like a TV or computer. Anything plugged into red outlets stays on—electricity to these receptacles never cuts off—making them perfect for satellite boxes or other appliances that need constant power.

The remaining outlets, generally neutral or green in color, are sensitive to current flowing through the blue outlet, so turning off the TV or computer cuts power to them as well. Some smart power strips can be made even smarter with timers or occupancy sensors that determine when to cut power to various devices.

Smart strips are available online or at specialty electronic retailers, and generally cost $20 or more depending on size. Payback generally can be achieved in less than one year, depending on the type of equipment the strips control and how often they are used.

Brian Sloboda is a program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the Cooperative Research Network.



In an average home, 5 percent to 8 percent of electric use stems from "energy vampires"— devices that use power even when turned off. Smart power strips help you unplug energy-draining devices when not in use easily.

There are typically three different types of outlets on a smart strip:

The blue outlet serves as a control plug (ideal for a TV or computer).

Devices plugged into red outlets stay on—electricity to these receptacles never cuts off, making them perfect for satellite boxes and other items that need constant power.

Remaining outlets, often green or neutral in color, are sensitive to current flowing through the blue outlet. Turning off a device plugged into the blue outlet cuts power to items connected to these outlets.

Smart strips are available online or at specialty electronic retailers and generally cost $20 or more depending on their size.

Source: Cooperative Research Network, Bits Ltd.

Can you help others save energy?
Send your conservation ideas or questions to us: P.O. Box 27306, Raleigh, NC 27611, or E-mail: editor@carolinacountry.com

Linemen show speed and safety skills during Pole Top Rescue competition

Jason Worley and Danny Lee, line workers from French Broad EMC in Marshall and Randolph EMC in Asheboro, respectively, were crowned Pole Top Rescue champions in October at a statewide competition in Raleigh.

The competition among the state's electric cooperatives takes place every two years. This year's had two categories based on the type of fall restraints used by the competitors. Both categories used 100 percent fall protection, but there were differences in how the competitors were secured to the pole. One group secured themselves in the traditional way with a lifeline and life hook, while the other group used personal fall restraints that protect from falls during the ascent and descent.

Worley took home the first prize in the traditional category, and Lee won the category that uses personal fall protection. They beat 23 other champions, each of whom won the event at their own cooperative earlier in the year when some 600 line workers participated.

Worley, the returning champion, recorded a time of 1:30.71, a new record. Lee's time was 1:59.84, setting the record for the personal fall protection category.

In the Pole Top Rescue scenario, line workers place an emergency radio call, don climbing gear, scale 20 feet up a utility pole, rig a rope, lower a 105-pound mannequin and begin CPR.

The second and third place competitors in the traditional category were Kenny Simmons of Pee Dee EMC (Wadesboro) in a time of 1:33.96, and Freddy White of Four County EMC (Burgaw) in a time of 1:39.35. Rounding out second and third place in the personal fall protection category were Justin Collins of Surry-Yadkin EMC (Dobson) in a time of 2:23.45, and Matthew Byrum of Albemarle EMC (Hertford) in a time of 2:24.44.

Winners were Danny Lee of Randolph EMC (above) and Jason Worley of French Broad EMC (right). Both set new records for the competition.

2010 Pole Top Rescue Competition Scoreboard

(in alphabetical order by co-op)

Name of Contestant	Electric Cooperative	Time (Minutes.seconds)
Matthew Byrum	Albemarle EMC, based in Hertford	2:24.44*
Ben Hurley	Blue Ridge EMC, based in Lenoir	2:33.03
Chuck Nance	Brunswick EMC, based in Shallotte	3:44.19
Jonathan Vernesoni	Cape Hatteras EC, based in Buxton	2:40.17
Jonathan Long	Carteret-Craven EC, based in Newport	1:52.55
Ken Thomas	Central EMC, based in Sanford	3:40.33*
Steve Lewis	Edgecombe-Martin County EMC, based in Tarboro	2:48.03
Lee Lackey	EnergyUnited, based in Statesville	3:00.84*
Freddy White	Four County EMC, based in Burgaw	1:39.35
Jason Worley	French Broad EMC, based in Marshall	1:30.71
Steve Height Jr.	Halifax EMC, based in Enfield	2:32.44
Brian Noland	Haywood EMC, based in Waynesville	2:29.16
David Raynor	Jones-Onslow EMC, based in Jacksonville	2:45.90*
Mike Jones	Lumbee River EMC, based in Red Springs	2:29.62*
Kenny Simmons	Pee Dee Electric, based in Wadesboro	1:33.96
Brent Talley	Piedmont EMC, based in Hillsborough	2:35.85
Danny Lee	Randolph EMC, based in Asheboro	1:59.84*
Charles Bryant	Roanoke EC, based in Roanoke Rapids	2:05.60
Scott Murray	Rutherford EMC, based in Forest City	2:30.16*
Timothy Williams	South River EMC, based in Dunn	3:22.63*
Justin Collins	Surry-Yadkin EMC, based in Dobson	2:23.45*
Brad Cox	Tideland EMC, based in Pantego	2:45.79*
Leonard Person	Tri-County EMC, based in Dudley	1:39.56
Jeff Furr	Union Power, based in Monroe	3:52.88*
Cory Lawrence	Wake Electric, based in Wake Forest	2:31.18*

** Denotes competitor wearing personal fall protection.*

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THE CHEAPEST KILOWATT IS THE ONE YOU DON'T USE

Delivering and using electricity efficiently has always been the cooperative way of doing business

By Magen Howard

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You're probably familiar with the concept of energy efficiency: doing more with less electricity. You could call efficiency the "fifth fuel"—in addition to coal, nuclear, natural gas and renewables—to show its importance in the mix of technologies that produce our power.

Energy efficiency benefits both electric co-ops and their members. When consumers use less energy and convert to more efficient appliances, they not only help keep their individual electric bills affordable but reduce the overall demand for power. That, in turn, delays the need for co-ops to build new generating plants and saves everyone money.

Due to to various efficiency measures, per capita energy consumption by electric co-op members has grown less than 1 percent per year since 1978 despite an explosion in computers and other home electronics. Before that date, average residential electricity use among co-op consumers increased by about 7 percent each year, according to information from the federal Rural Utilities Service and the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, a supplemental lender to electric co-ops.

A key piece in this trend has been the introduction of national energy efficiency standards for appliances. In the early 1970s, the amount of energy a refrigerator, for example, used depended on its design and the amount of built-in insulation. Due to ever-higher energy efficiency standards since then, the typical fridge today consumes 75 percent less electricity than in 1975 even though the size of the average unit has grown from 18 cubic feet to 22 cubic feet, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

"Appliances consume a huge amount of electricity, so they provide enormous potential to both save energy and take pressure off consumers' pocketbooks every month," explains DOE Secretary Steven Chu.

Unlike investor-owned utilities, not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric co-ops aren't structurally motivated to sell more kilowatt-hours.

The Energy Star program has also played a role in raising the bar for energy-efficient appliances and electronics. Launched in 1992 by DOE and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Energy Star-rated products in more than 60 categories deliver the same or better performance as comparable models while using less energy and saving money.

HELPING YOU SAVE

Electric co-ops have long been in the business of energy efficiency. It's a natural extension of their business model.

"Unlike investor-owned utilities, not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric co-ops aren't structurally motivated to sell more kilowatt-hours," says John Holt, senior manager of generation and fuels for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), the Arlington, Va.-based service organization of more than 900 electric co-ops across the U.S. "To deliver a safe and reliable supply of electricity at an affordable price, co-ops strive to maximize use of existing resources and infrastructure."

He adds: "Efficiency can help co-ops temporarily head off the need for constructing new generation. The biggest payoff comes from consumers switching to more energy-efficient geothermal heat pumps, lighting and appliances, combined with improved power plant efficiencies and expansion of load management programs that reduce electricity purchases during times of peak demand when power costs skyrocket."

According to NRECA surveys, 93 percent of co-ops conduct energy efficiency educational efforts such as holding public meetings and seminars; publishing reams of information in statewide consumer publications, local newsletters, bill stuffers and websites; broadcasting radio and TV advertisements; and even launching

a sweeping promotional campaign, "TogetherWeSave.com."

Almost 80 percent of co-ops offer residential energy audits and 66 percent offer commercial and industrial audits as well. Depending on a home's age and upkeep, savings from acting on an audit's recommendations can be significant. Brian Sloboda, senior program advisor for NRECA's Cooperative Research Network, predicts that most co-op members will see bills at least 5 percent to 10 percent lower—"amounts that far outpace anything spent."

Most co-ops are taking advantage of recent technology advancements and are upgrading power lines, replacing older transformers, using advanced equipment to control voltage fluctuations, and deploying advanced metering devices. Co-ops also are encouraging consumers to change out traditional incandescent lightbulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs).

Holt says, "You continue to use the same products at your home, but at a lower cost. The lights are on, the air conditioner is running, but they're more efficient, so you use less electricity."

And co-op members are answering the call. A recent NRECA study showed a majority taking low-cost or no-cost energy-saving steps like turning off lights when they leave a room, turning their thermostat up in summer and down in winter, replacing incandescent bulbs with CFLs or light-emitting diodes, adding weather stripping around doors and windows, and only running the dishwasher or washing machine with a full load.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

According to DOE, if every American household replaced one incandescent bulb with a CFL, our nation would save enough electricity to light 3 million homes and save more than $600 million a year.

And that's just iightbulbs. The Palo Alto, Calif.-based Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), an independent, non-profit research and development group that counts electric co-ops as members, sees massive potential for savings if energy efficiency initiatives are enacted nationwide.

"The achievable potential at the low end—what we call realistic—is 236 billion kilowatt-hours saved by 2030, roughly five times the present electricity consumption of the New York City metro area [annually]," states Omar Siddiqui, EPRI program manager for energy efficiency. "At the high end is a reduction of 382 billion kilowatt-hours by 2030."

Efficiency's greatest impact will likely come from advances in commercial lighting, commercial office equipment—particularly information technology components like servers and data centers—and home electronics.

"Large screen televisions, game consoles, laptops and cell phones—where there isn't a strong efficiency standard now in place—open up opportunities for efficient versions that result in significant savings," Siddiqui points out.

To uncover your own opportunities to save energy and money, call your electric cooperative or visit its website. You can also visit www.togetherwesave.com, sponsored by Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, the national branding program of electric co-ops, and discover small ways to keep your electric bills affordable.

Magen Howard writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

THE GREAT REFRIGERATOR TURN-IN

Last summer, Tideland EMC offered to pick up members' sidelined refrigerators and freezers, haul them to a metal recycler, credit the member's account, and mark up some substantial energy savings. According to Tideland's Heidi Jernigan Smith, who managed the project, the 30-day run brought in 317 refrigerator-freezers, more than 30 tons to the recycler. Having participated personally in the pick-up to document the energy-savings, she calculated the co-op is reducing its load by more than 500,000 kilowatt-hours per year, or 3.7 million kwh in 6½ years.

"You know you're from Carolina country if you have a spare refrigerator or two or three or four lying around," she said. "After all, it's in our frugal 'waste not, want not' way of life never to throw away something that's working perfectly fine. Problem is those extra refrigerators and freezers work a little too well, consuming up to 2,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity a year. Parting with a spare refrigerator-freezer can be the equivalent of throwing away one electric bill a year."

Tideland EMC is the Touchstone Energy cooperative that serves some 22,000 member accounts in Beaufort, Hyde, Dare, Craven, Pamlico and Washington counties.

Patrick Gurley (right), a Tideland EMC member in Pamlico County, turned in two Philco refrigerators during the co-op's turn-in program last summer, with help from Tideland's Ryan Tyndall (left) and Joe Avery. Although they cut the power cords on all units they collected, Tideland saved his 1954 Philco for a historical keepsake.

COOL FACTS:

- U.S. households have over 44.5 million refrigerators over 10 years old, 12.7 million of which are secondary units.
- Nearly a quarter of these refrigerators are at least 20 years old.
- Refrigerators made before 1993 use more than twice the energy of a new Energy Star qualified model.

A Lee County Christmas

Paper dolls, fruitcake and sing-alongs in simpler times

By AlexSandra Lett

After Daddy and Mama (Bud and Ruby Lett) married in 1942 and got through World War II they took on many of the country customs and timeless traditions of their families. They settled on the Lett farm in Buckhorn community in Lee County and continued to keep Christmas focused on religion rather than presents.

As my brother Jimmy, sister Carolyn and I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, Mama and Daddy gave us toys, but they didn't indulge us. On Christmas morning we would awake to three piles of stuff strategically separated—some presents for Jimmy in one corner, others for Carolyn on the couch, and even goodies for the one and only "Sandy Lynn" in a chair. Jimmy always got a toy suitable for boys like a red wagon or a bicycle, and one year a BB gun for taunting the birds, my beloved cats and every living creature. Carolyn and I relished our just-for-girls gifts like a doll or nurses' kit.

One special treat was a baby doll that drank water from a tiny bottle and then wet in her diapers. Mama's PMS kicked in when she had to clean up puddles of baby pee all over the house. When I visited Grandpa (Puzie Lett) at his country store across the road, he showed the doll to everybody who came to Lett's Grocery and Filling Station that day. He would say over and over again, "It beats anything I've ever seen in my life."

My favorite treasures were paper dolls, and I played with the Lennon sisters—Diane, Peggy, Kathy and Janet—until I was a teenager and stopped only because their paper clothes wore out. When Aunt Gladys would tease me about liking a neighbor boy, she would say, "When James comes a courtin' are you going to play paper dolls?" I liked the paper dolls because they became characters in my dramas, and I could spend hours making up stories about their "citified" lives—far beyond Buckhorn and our humble home.

My last doll arrived when I was 14, and I still remember the painted face, the vibrant blue dress and fake mink coat. Somewhere along the way Mama gave it away to a poor little girl and also passed along my cherished dollhouse to a younger cousin.

As Jimmy, Carolyn and I attended school and learned about what other kids were getting for Christmas our wish lists grew longer. The highlight of the holiday season for Carolyn and me was the day the Sears catalog arrived. We looked at it together, and she'd choose an item from one side of the fold, and I'd drool over something on the other page.

Through the years, Christmas presents became more important as we allowed catalogs in the mail and trips to town to inspire us young'ns to ask for more "thangs." Our desires didn't influence Mama and Daddy one bit—they continued to focus on Christmas as being the birthday of Jesus Christ and noted that the baby Jesus was given special but simple gifts from the Wise Men. They reminded us often that if a manger was good enough for Jesus, a farmhouse and simple life was good enough for us.

While participating in special services at church during the holidays, we collected canned goods and used clothes and toys to take to needy folks in the neighborhood. After the annual Christmas program, Santa Claus would drop by and hand out paper bags containing several fruits, a few nuts, a box of raisins and some hard candy. A group from the church also took these treats to shut-ins, sick folks and poor people to add some holiday cheer.

Cakes and pe-cans

One highlight of Christmas was getting involved with Mama's baking projects. She used her extraordinary cooking ability to make goodies for the family and others. Carolyn and I enjoyed helping her mix the sugar cookies—flour, butter, eggs and sugar. We rolled the dough out flat on white cloths and cut it into different designs and put them on greased-with-lard baking pans. To this day there is nothing that tastes better than these old-fashioned tea cakes. The leftover raw batter was equally good—so yummy that my sister and I devoured it together with two spoons, fighting each other for the sweet taste. Eventually one of us won the prize of licking out the bowl.

Mama's claim to fame at Christmas was her cakes, and everyone wanted some. She'd end up fixing pert-near 20 cakes and put them on a platter in creative combinations of ¼ red velvet, ¼ carrot cake, ¼ German chocolate, and ¼ apple nut. Only the most special of friends and family received this "Ruby Cake." Mama also made fruitcakes that people beg for, even ask for seconds—a light one and a dark variety (colored by cocoa and enhanced by dark raisins). Whoever came up with the joke that there are only a few fruitcakes in the world that are rotated year to year as Christmas presents because no one wants to eat them has never tasted Mama's.

While Mama was the queen of cakes, Daddy was the king of "pe-cans." He'd pick out pe-cans night after night so she'd have plenty of nuts for her baking needs. Eventually, our largest pecan tree produced enough for us to package some in plastic bags and give as Christmas presents to kinfolks, neighbors and friends.

Our holiday season officially started

on Thanksgiving Day when we'd all gather around the big pecan tree in the backyard and pick up nuts and put them in buckets in the back porch. Daddy's all-time favorite gift was a nutcracker we gave him one year for Christmas. He loved cracking and plucking out pecans, and we didn't mind one bit.

Daddy's fingers were best spent picking the "git-tar." Among my fondest memories is Daddy playing while we sang "Angels We Have Heard on High." Daddy's guitar is packed away, but there are sacred times imprinted on our minds—sing-alongs with Daddy picking out notes by ear on the guitar and Mama and Daddy holding each other close with us three young'ns gathering around them.

Mama and Daddy always said the best presents last day in and day out, not the "thangs" that strike our fancy for a while. During Christmas and every day there are many blessings all around us. Sometimes it is a pecan just picked from the shell or cookies fresh from the oven, sometimes it is a song played on the guitar, and sometimes it is just a sweet smile that comes from somebody's heart.

Daddy loved pickin' out "pe-cans" and pickin' his "git-tar." Bud was blessed with the ability to play music by ear and asked his daughters to sing hymns over and over again so he could pick out the notes.

Mama, wearing her apron, is stationed in her favorite place, the kitchen that became known as Ruby's Restaurant. Ruby's culinary creations inspired her daughter AlexSandra to preserve them in a book, "Timeless Recipes & Remedies."

Mama proudly displays her culinary creations that are spread out on the kitchen counter at Christmas 1994.

This is a copyrighted excerpt from AlexSandra Lett's popular book of North Carolina nostalgia, "A Timeless Place: Lett's Set a Spell at the Country Store." The 175-page hardcover book ($19.95), with about 100 photographs, as well as the newly released 4-CD audio version ($21.95), are available from Southern Books & Tales at www.atimelessplace.com. Currently, Ms. Lett is writing a book entitled "Going Crazy...Getting Sane." She is a professional speaker and the author of several other books, including "Timeless Recipes and Remedies: Country Cooking, Customs and Cures." She is a native of the Buckhorn community, Lee County, and a member of Central EMC. Phone: 919-258-9299. E-mail: LettsSetaSpell@aol.com.

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Little did I know when I ordered the Exercise 2000 Elite® that it would prove valuable to my wife of 62 years. I got it for the stiffness in my legs and it works perfectly to get me loosened up after playing tennis in the morning. When I come home I immediately get on the Exerciser 2000 Elite® for ten minutes and I feel great! My wife suffers from restless leg syndrome at night. Instead of walking the floor for a long period of time, she just gets on the Exerciser for ten minutes and the symptoms subside. —*Dick P.*

I am 76 years old, heavy, stiff with arthritis and a leukemic for the past nine years. Using your machine twice a day has made me feel ten years younger. I also have a great deal more energy. When you say that your company is in the business of "helping people feel better", it is no fib! —*Kate B.*

I am 97 years old and have edema in my left foot and leg. My daughter saw the Exerciser 2000 in an ad and encouraged me to try it. It is helping a lot and I feel alive again. Thank you!—*Grace R.*

After using the Exerciser 2000 Elite® twice a day for one week the swelling in my ankles went away. It has also helped my breathing, as I can get out and walk without having to stop and catch my breath! Thank you. —*Shirley H., Florida*

I am an 88 year old woman with multiple health problems. After seeing the ad for the Exerciser 2000 Elite® I ordered it and use it daily. I can tell it has improved circulation in my legs and by doing that it has helped my balance and walking problems. To those of you that think that you can't do regular exercise anymore, try this piece of equipment and you will be amazed how much better you will feel.—*Mildred F.*

As a Chiropractor, I would say the Exerciser 2000 enables people to benefit themselves at home. It is a valuable asset in moving lymph fluid, oxygenating the blood, increasing immune system function, maintaining mobility in the spine, and freeing up a spine that had become stiff and arthritic. —*Garry G., D.C.*

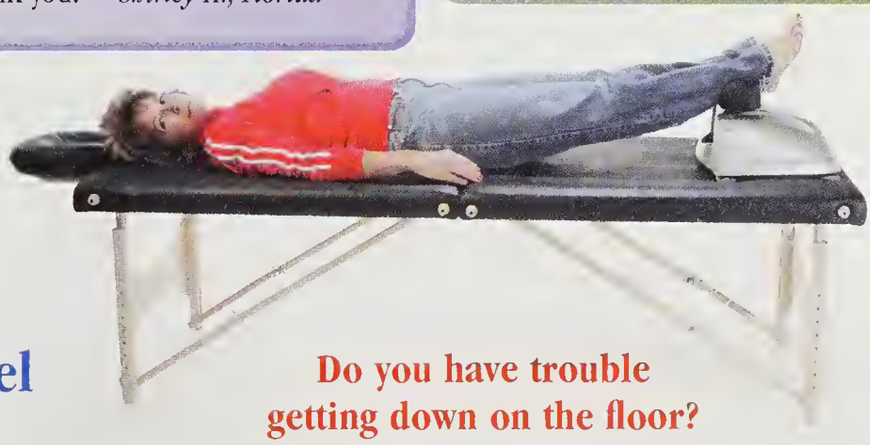

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Photo by Ven Carver

Sly Murray

The super chef of Duke Marine Lab has a new cookbook

By Ann Green

Inside the Duke University Marine Lab dining room in Beaufort, chef Sylvester "Sly" Murray marvels at the more than 100 college banners hanging from the ceiling—from Cornell University in New York to Tulsa University in Oklahoma.

"These banners give warmth to the room and show how many people I have cooked for," says Murray, a Newport resident and a Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative member.

With the mix of backgrounds from across the United States and abroad, he has learned to cook diverse dishes. Some of Murray's favorites are included in "Down Home Coastal, Exotic, and Traditional Cooking," packed with 677 pages of recipes for all occasions, including holidays.

"Most of the recipes are designed for the average Joe on the street, the busy housewife, professionals or college students," he says. "Anybody can pick up the book and cook."

Murray says most of the recipes' ingredients and herbs can found on the average person's kitchen shelf.

The cookbook is two books in one with two sections: a melting pot of recipes and vegetarian cuisine.

He developed many vegetarian recipes for international students and scientists who have passed through the lab. "Students often ask me to make a dish from back home," he says. "If I don't know how, I learn."

To order "Down Home Coastal, Exotic, and Traditional Cooking," published by Infinity Publishing, call The Book Shop, Morehead City, (252) 240-1163. On the Web at: www.amazon.com.

Although Murray can make a variety of exotic dishes, he still likes traditional southern dishes, including collard greens with ham hocks.

"My next cookbook is about soul food," he says. "A lot of the recipes will be from my southern and Baptist background."

Murray, who grew up Down East in Beaufort, had a spatula in his hand as long as he can remember. "I started cooking when I was seven," he says. "My mother was a great cook and was my foundation. I learned to take anything in the kitchen—whether leftovers or scraps—and make a fantastic dish."

Because of the large fishing industry in Carteret County, Murray learned to make seafood dishes, including Down East Conch Chowder. "Seafood was a mainstay of my diet," he says. "It is a shame that a lot of fisheries are dying out here. It wasn't unusual to have fried hogfish and cornbread for breakfast."

By the time Murray was a teenager, he was flipping burgers in restaurants and cafeterias. When he finished high school in 1975, he became a food service agent at the marine lab and never left. "I was intending to work part-time and go to community college," he says. However, within a year of working here, he found that he loved the job.

Murray, who has no children, thinks of the students as his own.

"I love taking care of the kids here," he says. "Sometimes, someone will wander in and tell me his roommate is sick, starving and cannot make it to dinner. The kid's eyes get big when I offer to make a pot of soup and sandwiches. The human connection makes the job worth it."

Ann Green is a Raleigh writer whose articles have appeared in the Los Angeles Times, The Atlanta-Journal Constitution, Coastwatch magazine and other publications. She writes about Ashe County artist Cher Shaffer on page 25.

Southern Pork Roast with Stuffing

from Sly Murray's "Down Home" book

- ¾ cups celery, finely diced
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- ⅓ cup plus 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- 3 cups cornbread-stuffing mix
- 1½ cups granny smith apples, peeled, seeded and chopped finely
- ¾ cup water
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon dried rosemary leaves
- ¼ teaspoon thyme
- 1 (4-to 4½ pound) pork rib roast

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Sauté celery and onion in butter until tender. Combine stuffing mix, apples, water, salt, rosemary, and thyme; add celery mixture. Toss together lightly. Loosely stuff about ⅓ cup mixture in each pocket of roast. Place meat, fat side up, in shallow roasting pan. Roast, uncovered, in a 325-degree oven for 2½ to 3 hours or until meat thermometer registers 170 degrees. Bake extra stuffing in small casserole for the last 30 minutes of roasting time. Remove backbone of roast and serve. Makes 8 servings.

**Tip: Ask the butcher in the meat department to loosen backbone of roast and cut pockets between ribs for stuffing.*

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Jewish life in North Carolina, *a multimedia project*

A groundbreaking, four-part, multimedia project has produced several interesting ways for people to learn about Jewish life in North Carolina.

The project, called "Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina" features a traveling, free museum exhibit, a documentary film, a companion book, and fourth- and eighth-grade curriculum guides with DVDs for North Carolina public schools. Former governor James B. Hunt Jr. is the project's honorary chairman.

It's the first major effort to document and present more than 400 years of Jewish life in North Carolina, and was organized and produced by the Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina in Durham.

Shofar blowing for Rosh Hashanah, Mount Mitchell, 2000. Courtesy of Warren Gentry.

Museum exhibit

The same-named traveling exhibit is currently at the N.C. Museum of History in Raleigh. It chronicles how Jews have blended into Tar Heel life while preserving their ethnic and religious traditions.

"The exhibit brings to life Jewish values—family, faith, work and study," says Leonard Rogoff, exhibit curator, historian and the companion book's author. "It challenges stereotypes both Southern and Jewish."

The exhibit presents a historical overview of Jewish immigration and acculturation and shows how Jews, through struggle and negotiation, became integrated and helped build a New South.

Documentary film

This 60-minute documentary brings history to life with re-enactments, archival photographs, vintage films and entertaining oral histories. Produced by Emmy Award-winning filmmaker and historian Steve Channing, it sells for $19.95.

Companion book

The illustrated volume presents a sweeping chronicle of Jewish life in the Tar Heel State, from colonial times to the present. The book includes more than 125 historic and contemporary photographs and incorporates oral histories, profiles of individuals and historical narrative. Readers learn about forward-thinking entrepreneur Karl Robbins, who purchased farmland for Research Triangle Park, as well as expressive Fannye Marks, whose dress shop in Roanoke Rapids outfitted the wives of governors. Written by Rogoff, it was published by the University of North Carolina Press in Chapel Hill in association with JHFNC. Hardcover, 432 pages, $35. The book and documentary are sold in the N.C. Museum of History's gift shop, and online at www.jhfnc.org.

Educational DVDs and teacher resource guides

The DVDs will be available for use in "Peoples of North Carolina," the curriculum required for fourth and eighth grades. Teacher guides are available now for download on the N.C. Museum of History's "Down Home" section on www.ncmuseumofhistory.org. For updates, visit www.jhfnc.org or call (919) 668-5839.

—Karen Olson House

Traveling museum exhibit

Four re-created settings at the free exhibit focus on these Jewish values:

"A Love of Learning" focuses on the intellectual and cultural accomplishments of Tar Heel Jews. The setting re-creates the study from the Charlotte home of civil rights activist Harry Golden, who published the newspaper Carolina Israelite from 1942 to 1966.

"Keeping the Faith" features a reconstructed synagogue sanctuary with religious ritual objects from a synagogue in Winston-Salem such as a Torah, Mezuzahs and spice boxes.

"Building Businesses: Creating Communities" includes an authentic dry-goods store stocked with vintage merchandise and artifacts from family stores in Whitakers, Lincolnton and Greensboro. Since Southern Jews found the doors closed to many professions, they depended on the retail trade for survival. Some merchants became leading philanthropists, helping to build hospitals, art museums and more.

"Family Comes First" centers around a multimedia dining table set for a Friday night Sabbath dinner, allowing exhibit visitors to experience a Jewish Sabbath.

"Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina" is at the N.C. Museum of History through March 7, 2011. The museum's phone is (919) 807-7900 or visit www.ncmuseumofhistory.org. After that, it will travel to these dates and locations:

April 2011 Greensboro Historical Museum, Greensboro

October 2011 Cape Fear Museum, Wilmington

January 2012 Levine Museum of the New South, Charlotte

Future location (not dated yet) Asheville

Joseph and Celia Lipman wedding, New Bern, 1911. Courtesy of Elbert Lipman.

Top left: *House of Jacob Sunday school, Raleigh, 1928. Courtesy of Francis Penslar.*

How to use weather stripping to block cold air leaks

This month, winter officially arrives. Any drafts around doors and windows that went unnoticed during fall are now downright uncomfortable—and adding to your energy bills.

Weather stripping offers a relatively quick fix for drafty doors. To determine if a door leading out of your house needs new weather stripping, look for daylight. If even a sliver of daylight remains visible between the door and its frame or the floor, add weather stripping.

Next, shut the door or window on a piece of paper. If you can pull the paper out without tearing it, you're losing energy.

There are a variety of weather stripping materials available, each good for fitting different types of door and window frames. Most are made of rubber, foam, metal, vinyl or a combination of materials. To help determine the right replacement item for the job, if any old, worn material has been previously installed take a sample to the hardware store. Be sure to note how it was installed as you remove it.

If no material exists as a guide, make detailed notes about the type of gap and how the door or window is installed—someone at the hardware store should be able to make a recommendation for you.

Once you have the proper materials, consult any instructions that may be on the weather stripping package. Installation techniques range from simple to technical, depending on the material being used.

Weather stripping windows

- Apply weather stripping between the sash and frame.
- The weather stripping shouldn't interfere with the operation of the window.

Weather stripping doors

- Choose the appropriate door sweeps and thresholds.
- Weather strip the entire door jamb.
- Apply one continuous strip along each side.
- Make sure the weather stripping meets tightly at the corners.
- Use a thickness that causes the weather stripping to tightly press between the door and the door jamb, without making it difficult to shut.

Weather Stripping Basics

While you should always consult specific instructions on weather stripping packages, here are some basic facts to keep in mind.

1. Weather stripping should be applied to clean, dry surfaces in temperatures above 20°F.
2. Measure the area to be weather stripped twice before you cut anything.
3. Apply weather stripping snugly against both surfaces. The material should compress when the window or door is shut.

Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Where else are the drafts in your house?

When warm air is lost through tiny gaps and cracks, your heating system will work harder to keep your home warm, raising your energy bill and reducing your comfort.

As long as you're outside hanging holiday lights and decorating your yard this season, take a few minutes to stroll around your house in search of other leaky culprits. Specifically, where are you losing air?

What to look for

- Gaps and cracks around exterior light fixtures, outdoor taps and other openings in the outside wall of the house.
- Gaps around cable and phone lines or dryer vents that enter the house.
- Exhaust vents and fans. Make sure they're closed tightly and free of dirt and lint.
- Caulking around windows. It should be in good condition where window frames meet the brick or siding.
- Damage to siding or other exterior cladding. Rips can let in cold air and water, which causes mold.
- Loose bricks and mortar around the chimney or foundation.

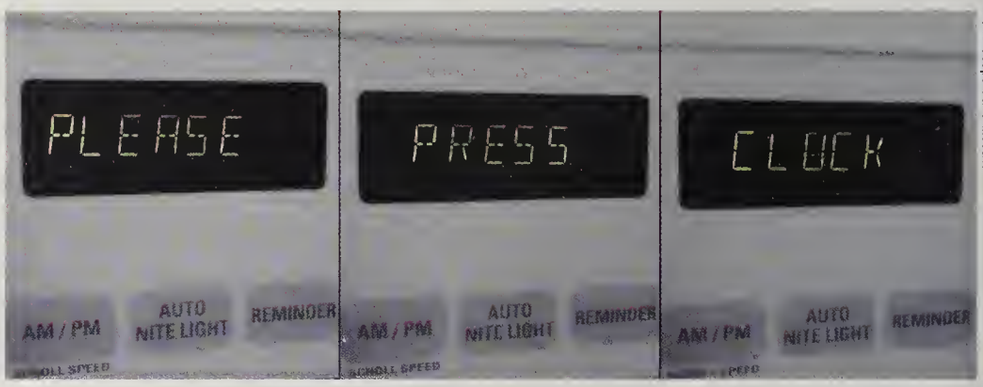
Fixing leaks you find

- Seal gaps and cracks around fixtures, openings, door and window frames with exterior caulk.
- Use roof caulk to seal flashing around chimneys, skylights, rooftop vents and plumbing risers.
- Call a contractor to inspect and repair loose bricks.

Power blinks are annoying, but they show the electric system is working properly

By Scott Turner

At one time or another, we've all returned home or woken up late for work to see a blinking "12:00" on our digital alarm clock. You then have to reset every digital clock in your household that doesn't have a battery backup, from the microwave oven to the answering machine. Usually, this state of "eternal midnight" was caused by a "blink" in the electrical system.



Pella Cooperative Electric

To avoid having to reset clocks, you can use digital clocks equipped with battery backups.

While blinks can be annoying, they do show that an electrical system is working exactly as designed. And while your electric cooperative has taken steps to reduce the number of blinks across its power system, there are measures you can take as well.

Let's look at blinks. These momentary power interruptions can occur anywhere along a power system—from the time electrons are generated at a power plant to being shipped across transmission line to substations, or during distribution from a substation to your home.

Having an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) on your computer can minimize adverse effects of blinks.

Why do blinks happen?

Blinks are created when a breaker, or switch, opens along any portion of the power system. The breaker usually opens because of a large, quick rise of electrical current. This large rise, called a fault condition, can occur when a tree branch touches a line, lightning strikes or a wire breaks.

When this happens, a relay senses the fault and tells the breaker to open, preventing the flow of power to the problem site. After opening, the breaker quickly closes. The brief delay, which allows the fault to clear, usually lasts less than two seconds.

If the fault clears, every home or business that receives electricity off that power line has just experienced a blink. This could include thousands of accounts if the breaker protects a transmission line or a substation.

Reducing blink's effects at your home

Your co-op employs methods to reduce blink frequency. Tree trimming is probably the easiest and most common way, and one area where you can help. If you know of a potential problem with any trees or limbs located too close to a power line, contact your electric cooperative.

Meanwhile, you can reduce the frustration of blinks by purchasing an alarm clock equipped with a battery backup. This type of digital clock offers "ride through" ability for momentary outages. It will also keep the correct time and sound an alarm in case of a long-duration outage, provided a charged battery is in place. As an added benefit, these devices only use the battery in the event of a power interruption.

Blinks affect all electrical equipment, not just digital clocks. If there is a blink while you are operating a computer, your computer may be interrupted and you may have to restart it, hoping all the while that there will be few affected files.

An uninterruptible power supply (UPS) on your computer can help prevent information loss. The UPS incorporates surge suppression technology with a battery backup and provides you some time to save whatever you were working on and exit your computer properly.

Electric cooperatives operate active system maintenance programs and work hard to fix sources of service interruptions. Even though blinks may never disappear from our electrical energy delivery system, by working together with we can minimize effects of the interruptions and the frequency with which the occur.

Scott Turner, P.E. is a former electric co-op employee who consults on electrical engineering through his firm, JD Engineering, PC, in Hamilton, Mont.

Learn about medications to ensure your safety

By Magen Howard

Medications exist to make us feel better. But when taken incorrectly, they carry serious consequences.

Incorrectly using medications increases the chance of severe medical complications or even death. There's a price tag with it, too—more than $177 billion annually in added prescriptions, hospital admissions, doctor calls, emergency room visits and nursing home admissions, according to the American Pharmacists Association.

Over-the-counter (OTC) drugs pose as much risk as prescription medications. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, too much acetaminophen—the active ingredient in Tylenol—can cause liver damage; overuse of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen, can lead to stomach bleeding and kidney disease, Of course, the ability for drugs to negatively interact with each other increases with the amount of medications taken.

NRECA
MAY CAUSE DROWSINESS. ALCOHOL MAY INTENSIFY EFFECT. USE CARE USING MACHINES.
MAY CAUSE DIZZINESS.
DO NOT CHEW OR CRUSH, SWALLOW WHOLE
Drug Facts
Active ingredient (in each tablet)
Purpose
Incorrectly using medications increases the chance of severe medical complications.

Children's medication

Children have special medications, so take special care when administering them. These tips are from www.OTCsafety.org.

- Never give a child medicine intended for adults. Do not try to estimate a child's dose of an adult medication.
- Use the measuring device that comes with the medicine. A kitchen spoon could deliver the wrong dose of medicine.
- Do not use oral cough and cold medicines for children younger than 4.
- Never give medications that contain aspirin to a child for cold or flu symptoms unless directed to do so by a doctor.
- Keep all medicines out of sight, and avoid telling children any medicine tastes like candy. They may look for it later to have more "candy."

The following tips, compiled by the American Pharmacists Association and the Consumer Health Product Association's education arm, OTCSafety.org, can help you manage your medications.

- Be informed. Talk to your pharmacist and doctor. Ask when and how to take your medication; what to do if you miss a dose; potential side effects; and how your medications might interact with other drugs you're taking.
- Check prescriptions upon pickup. Before you drive away, check the label to make sure it is the correct drug and look at the medicine. Question any unexplained changes in the medication size, color, markings, amounts, or doses.
- Read the OTC label. This seems obvious but a lot of people don't take this important step. On OTC medications, always read and follow the Drug Facts label. The active ingredients section of the label is especially important if you're taking more than one medicine—to make sure you're not taking too much of the same active ingredient. Never take more than one medicine with the same active ingredient unless told to do so by a doctor.
- Give all information to health-care professionals. Create a list of all the medications you're taking—including vitamins and natural supplements—and share it with all health-care professionals who treat you. This helps to prevent drug interactions.
- Treat your symptoms. When taking OTC medications, choose those that treat only the symptoms you have, so you take only the active ingredients you need.

Magen Howard writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Sources: American Pharmacists Association, Institute for Safe Medicine Practices, Consumer Health Product Association Educational Foundation, U.S. Food & Drug Administration

Stocking stuffers that save energy

Teach kids about CFL savings

Here's a bright idea for your kids' holiday stockings: Put a couple of compact fluorescent light bulbs in with their other goodies.

CFLs use about two-thirds less energy than traditional, incandescent light bulbs, and they last up to 10 times longer. That's because these admittedly funny-looking, twisty light bulbs use a lower wattage to produce the same amount of light. The translation: A 15-watt CFL is just as bright as a 60-watt incandescent.

You don't think your little ones will appreciate the gift of energy savings? Take this opportunity to teach your children and teenagers about how they can take pride in doing their part in reducing energy consumption and by that, helping the environment. You can also explain they got another gift simply because the CFL bulbs created savings.

Smart power strips for electronics lovers

There's always someone who seems impossible to buy for around the holidays: the electronics lover who already has every TV, DVD player, sound system and hand-held gadget you can think of. Try a creative stocking stuffer or gift to help the technology lover manage and protect his or her expensive electronics: a smart power strip.

Smart power strip cut down on "phantom power"—the small amount of electricity that electric devices use even when they are turned off or put in sleep mode. The strip will have one control outlet for a computer or TV, and additional outlets for printers, fax machines, speakers, DVD players and the cable box, for example.

When the TV is shut off or the computer enters sleep mode, the strip will cut power to the other outlets. This makes it easier to shut off all electronics at once and will save the lucky recipient money on power bills. Most strips come with separate outlets that don't shut off—for devices like clocks that need to run all the time. (For more about smart power strips, see "Try This" on page 9.)

The rules for holiday extension cords

It's time to haul out the holiday extension cords and the piles of decorative lights.

Keep your cords and cables from becoming a fire-waiting-to-happen or a tripping hazard eyesore by following three rules:

1 Extension cords are for temporary use only. Never use one to help the cord on a permanent lamp or appliance reach the outlet. Move the lamp closer to the outlet or have an electrician add an outlet closer to the lamp. Extension cords are not sturdy enough to use all year. Use them during the holidays, and then store them safely away.

2 Don't overload your electrical circuits with too many cords just because they are plugged in power strips. If you've got dozens of cords plugged into power strips and surge protectors around your tree or in your home office or TV room, you could be overloading circuits. Although power strips let you plug lots of cords into one wall outlet, but they don't give that outlet any extra juice. That single outlet is connected to a circuit, which most likely is providing power to several other outlets in the room. If you have a lot of cords, hire a licensed electrician to upgrade your circuits and add outlets.

3 Tidy your tangle of cords and cables—around the Christmas tree and where you use electronics. Look behind your office desk or TV cabinet, and you'll probably find a rat's nest of cords, cables, wires and plugs that attach to your computer, scanner, printer, telephone, battery charger and external hard drive. Unplug and store away any that aren't in use, and bundle the rest up with a Velcro cord wrap (buy it at a hardware or electronics store).

Cher Shaffer

Influenced by a Cherokee spirit, an Ashe County artist's work is in high demand

Text and photos by Ann Green

After folk artist Cher Shaffer endured a harsh winter with knee-deep snows in the Ashe County mountains, her vision shifted.

Instead of painting colorful figures, Shaffer began doing line drawings with little color and a ghostly and primal quality.

"There are a lot of modern things that have no relationship to the realness of life," says Shaffer, a member of the Blue Ridge Electric cooperative. "This past winter made life real again."

Over the years, Shaffer's folk art—which is in the private collections of Oprah Winfrey, Whoopi Goldberg, Jane Fonda and Henry Winkler—has undergone many changes.

After her mother's death in 1977, she did memory paintings of whimsical animals and children from her childhood on a Georgia farm. Shaffer, a self-taught artist, also depicted black sharecroppers from summers spent on her grandparents' Mississippi farm.

"This was my way of mourning her," she says.

Eight years later, when Shaffer's heart failed due to extreme exhaustion, she changed to free-flowing images and moved into three-dimension work.

However, she has been designing spirit figures or dolls out of tree bark, recycled clothes, beads and other materials from her surroundings since the beginning.

In Shaffer's small home in rural Creston, she shows several dolls, including a "Grandmother" doll with a moon face. "The gravitational pull of the moon has a lot to do with the rhythms of a female body. If a woman is almost to term and there is a full moon, the baby will come."

Shaffer has made fertility dolls for a specialist in California who had hard luck cases.

Cher Shaffer will exhibit at the 9th annual Fearrington Folk Art Show at Fearrington Village, Chatham County, Feb. 19–20.

Cher Shaffer
Creston, N.C.
Hours by Appointment
www.chershaffer.com
mountainmojo@skybest.com

Her "fetish" spirit figures usually have holes in their heads so the buyer can add something personal—such as a pet's hair or feathers.

Shaffer's paintings, dolls, sculpture and other folk art have been featured at folk arts shows around the country, including the traveling "O, Appalachia: Artists of the Southern Mountains." Her work also is in 15 museums.

Shaffer's deep roots in the soil stem from her mother's Cherokee and Mulengeon heritage and her childhood in rural Georgia.

"My mother was a very innocent, childlike person," she says. "She was a naturally mystical human being who interpreted everything from dreams and visions to stars and the earth." Her German father was a staunch Baptist and very spiritual.

By age 5, Shaffer was making tiny figures out of red clay from her farm. "My sisters and I spent our entire childhood in the woods," she says. "That is where I learned to use what was at hand."

As an adult, Shaffer has lived in rural areas in Ohio and West Virginia. Six years ago, she moved to Creston to get back to her Cherokee roots.

"We were rural before, but now we are isolated," says Shaffer. "We have a creek that runs by our house. Just the raw beauty inspires me. There is plenty of nature, wildlife and birds. But there is no description for the mountains that are like big sleeping giants. They are mystical and definitely overpowering."

Ann Green is a Raleigh writer whose articles have appeared in the Los Angeles Times, The Atlanta-Journal Constitution, Coastwatch magazine and other publications. She writes about chef Sly Murray on page 18.

I Remember...

Grandma's Christmas tree

My greatest memory happens every year on Dec. 3, my grandmother's birthday. It was not just the day when her seven children and their families would gather at her home to celebrate her day. It was also the day that the entire family would decorate the Christmas tree. It was her pride and joy. It was also the one thing she would tell you she wanted for her birthday. And we were always happy to give it to her.

The tree had so many ornaments that it had to be at least 14 feet high in order to be able to hold all those beautiful and unique bobbles and decorations. No two were alike, and they came from all over the world. Some were handmade by children and grandchildren. Some came from far off places visited by friends and family and given as gifts. They were blown glass, Styrofoam, a cardboard milk carton (I made that one in kindergarten art class). My great-grandmother gave her some from her childhood in Germany that were spun cotton and rolled in glass to look like icicles. Those date back to the mid 1800s.

When my grandmother passed away in 1984, the ornaments were divided up amongst the kids and grandkids. We got our favorites or the ones we had given to her as gifts. My sister still has the spun cotton ones, yellowed from time but still just as pretty as I remember. Even my grandma's great-grandchildren have some. So her memory lives on in children that she never knew who know her now through this tradition that even they keep.

Leslee Treiber, Pinetops, Edgecombe-Martin County EMC

The tree had to be 14 feet high to hold all the ornaments.

It's missing from this picture because I was not about to take it off.

The dance by the Christmas tree

Todd and I had been dating for about six months in 1997. Sometime during that time I told him that I dreamed of dancing with him in front of the Christmas tree. He invited me to his home Dec. 18. He prepared a wonderful meal that we ate by candlelight. Soft music was playing in the background. As we neared the end of our meal, the song "Unforgettable" by Natalie Cole came on. Todd stood up, took my hand and asked me to dance. My dream was coming true!

I was dancing with the man of my dreams in front of a beautiful Christmas tree, but after just a few minutes, he stopped and said, "I need to call Phillip about hunting tomorrow. Can you get me the phone book?"

To this day, I do not know who Phillip is, and my first thought was, "You have got to be kidding!" But I went ahead and opened the cabinet to get the phone book. I looked in to see not a phone book but a diamond ring! He got on one knee and said what I am sure were some wonderful things. I have no clue what they were. I was too busy crying and saying "Yes!"

We have been married now for 11 years and have two incredible children. Even now, he never misses an opportunity to make my life exciting and wonderful.

Wanda Garren, Lincolnton, Rutherford EMC

Dolls and jack rocks

Presnell School was a one-room school. One teacher taught 30 or more students from primer to the seventh grade. My first teacher was Ola Winebarger. My second teacher was Susie Henson. She taught three years there.

We played tag, London Bridge and many other games. One winter she told us to bring vegetables, and she made a pot of soup on our pot belly stove. It was so good. It was the only hot lunch we ever had at school. We had Christmas plays and a big Balsam pine Christmas tree. Teacher brought her own decorations for it. We drew names and bought 10-cent gifts for each other. The teacher always bought us a gift. Dolls and jack rocks for us girls.

My happiest memories are of my school days. I'm 82 now. Only eight are still living that are in this picture.

Viola Ward, Banner Elk, Blue Ridge Electric

I'm standing beside the small boy and behind the little girl who's sitting down and looks like she's asleep.

Taking care of each other

I grew up in the Elmwood community in Iredell County where being a neighbor to someone meant more than just living next door to them. I remember walking down the road to one neighbor's house for fresh milk every week or so. I remember impromptu baseball games in which the whole neighborhood sometimes took part. I remember Halloweens where we would walk for miles because we knew where the homemade goodies were and where most of the time we were expected. There was no worry about safety. We took care of each other.

My most special memory took place when I was less than 12 years old. It was shortly before Christmas, and my two brothers and three sisters (my youngest sister was just a baby) and I were eagerly looking forward to the holidays. Then my father was diagnosed with tuberculosis and was sent to Black Mountain. In those days, it was common for TB patients to be sent to a special facility with almost no visitors. My mother was to be the only one allowed to see him, and Daddy was going to be there for several months. I do not believe that Mom worked at that time. At any rate, Christmas looked pretty bleak to us.

Then we found out firsthand what being a neighbor was all about. Several grocery stores sent us bag after bag of foodstuffs. More than one convenience store in the neighborhood took up contributions for us. The local Elk's lodge and the Moose lodge arranged for us to receive more toys, including bicycles, than we had ever seen in our lifetime. Even our dog received a toy banana that squeaked. Later I found out that the principal of our elementary school had played a huge role in coordinating this fantastic show of generosity.

To this day at Christmastime, I look back with gratitude to a loving community who wanted to make sure that a mother and her six children were well cared for.

Vicki S. Dillard, Statesville, EnergyUnited

When Roby came home

I remember Christmas after World War II had ended. Snow was on the ground about four inches deep. I remember how beautiful it was at our mountain home on the path going to the spring where we got our water. There was no water or electricity in homes where we lived. The holly trees had red berries on them, and two of my brothers had returned that week from overseas: Litch and Estel.

My sister Josephine and I always got up first to start fires in the cook stove and fireplace, which provided the only heat we had. When we went to bed the night before it was late. We sat up singing because we were all so happy that our brothers were home from the war. But we still had another brother, Roby, who had not returned from the war.

When we got up to start the fires we saw Roby in uniform lying in a chair asleep. He had come in during the night and wanted to surprise us. We ran to wake everybody up. I had never seen my mother and dad so happy.

Irene Pennington, Hickory

SEND US YOUR *Memories*

We'll pay $50 for those we publish in the magazine. We can put even more on our Internet sites, but can't pay for them. (If you don't want them on the Internet, let us know.)

Guidelines:

1. Approximately 200 words.
2. Digital photos must be at least 600kb or 1200 by 800 pixels.
3. No deadline, but only one entry per household per month.
4. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want yours returned.
5. We pay $50 for each one published in the magazine. We retain reprint rights.
6. Include your name, mailing address and the name of your electric cooperative.
7. **E-mail:** iremember@carolinacountry.com **Or by U.S. mail:** I Remember, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616

WHERE IN CAROLINA COUNTRY IS THIS?

This is a Carolina Country scene in Touchstone Energy territory. If you know where it is, send your answer by Dec. 7 with your name, address and the name of your electric cooperative.

By e-mail: where@carolinacountry.com

Or by mail: Where in Carolina Country?
P.O. Box 27306
Raleigh, NC 27611

The winner, chosen at random and announced in our January issue, will receive $25.

November winner

The November photo was a trick photo, but the trick was on us. It's a Smithfield's Chicken 'N' BBQ promotional sign near the Rocky Mount store. But it turns out there are at least six more of the signs near Smithfield's 32 locations in the state. So we have a total of seven winners at $25 each, all chosen at random from the flood of correct answers (including many of you who sent no contact information). The winners are Prince Carter of Warrenton (Halifax EMC), Heather Royal of Newton Grove (South River EMC), Diann Linebaugh of Siler City (Central EMC), Linda Holzworth of Statesville (EnergyUnited), Gloria Edwards of Rocky Mount (Edgecombe-Martin County EMC), Alexander White Jr. of Henderson, and Carol Poplin of Hamlet (Pee Dee EMC).

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A Surry County Christmas scene
by Gerald Yokely, Moments in Carolina Photography
MomentsinCarolina@roadrunner.com

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO OUR
CAROLINA COUNTRY FAMILY
AND BEST WISHES FOR
A HAPPY AND HEALTHY 2011.

From the staff at

Carolina country

"North Carolina Textures" calendar

NORTH CAROLINA TEXTURES
Scenes from the Mountains to the Coast
2011 Calendar by Elaine O'Neil
Calendar proceeds benefit the N. C. Cancer Hospital which provides the most advanced and compassionate cancer care to patients from every county in North Carolina.

This 2011 monthly calendar features original art created from textiles—12 scenes that highlight the beauty and character of North Carolina. Instead of using paint, Chapel Hill artist Elaine O'Neil made each image using a myriad of fabric colors and textures, all painstakingly sewn together to create distinctive scenes. The scenes represent many of North Carolina's iconic places, including the N.C. Zoo, Pinehurst and Durham Bulls baseball stadium. The 11-by-14-inch calendar sells for $30. Proceeds from the calendar sales will benefit the N.C. Cancer Center in Chapel Hill.

(919) 966-5905
www.cancer.unc.edu/gift/calendar

"Nights"

This CD by North-Carolina-based bluegrass band "Nu-Blu" offers a driving blend of music, featuring timeless tunes and melodies enhanced with youthful energy and modern twists. Its songs include "I Won't Be Around," "How Do I Move On?," "In and Out of Love," "My Sweet Carolyn," and "Lonesome Whistles." Band members Carolyn Routh, Daniel Routh, Kendall Gales and Levin Austin recorded the CD in Red Squared Audio in Siler City, with additional tracks recorded at Riverside Audio in Mt. Gilead. Nu-Blu was named the 2010 Carolina Music Awards Country Group of the Year, and its label is Pinecastle Records, based in Columbus, N.C. "Nights" has 12 tracks, with a run time of 37 minutes, 38 seconds, and sells for $11.97.

(800) 289-6923 (800-BUY-MY-CD)
www.nu-blu.com

Carolina Country Store features interesting, useful products, services, travel sites, handicrafts, food, books, CDs and DVDs that relate to North Carolina. To submit an item for possible publication, e-mail editor@carolinacountry.com with a description and clear, color pictures. Or you can submit by mail: Country Store, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC, 27616. Those who submit must be able to handle mail orders.

on the bookshelf

The Christmas That Almost Wasn't

On a quiet night in Santa Town, something terrible has happened. The reindeer are nowhere to be found! Can Santa Claus and his resourceful elves find the reindeer in time to save Christmas?

This holiday book is about what happens on the day before Christmas Eve when a jealous cousin wreaks havoc with the reindeer. The book offers a contemporary twist because Santa's Global Positioning System and personal computer end up helping to save the day. The elves wash their dishes, a helpful touch for parents who want to instill personal responsibility in their kids. Bill Turner, a Cornelius resident, wrote the story, which is colorfully illustrated by Jeane Kendall of Clayton. Published by Warren Publishing, which is served by EnergyUnited, of Cornelius. Softcover, 27 pages, $14.95.

(704) 892-8376
www.warrenpublishing.net

The Golden Ring

It is just days before Christmas in 1918 in Meyersdale, a picturesque township nestled in the dense snow-covered mountains of western Pennsylvania's coal country. Anna, an idealistic nine-year-old, has an especially close relationship with her father, Joseph, a hardworking engineer on the B&O railroad. One of Anna's most precious possessions is a golden ring given to her on her ninth birthday by her parents. A series of puzzling dreams are shared by Joseph and Anna about Jesus, and the giving and receiving of a ring. Their search for the dreams' meaning leads them to share an emotional and bonding Christmas experience and they learn much about the human potential for generosity, love and faith. Author and EnergyUnited member John Snyder lives in Mocksville. Published by Warner Books. Hardcover, 165 pages, $15.95.

(336) 998-7034
www.johnsnyder.net

Hunting & Fishing in the Great Smokies

Filled with anecdotes, fishing and hunting stories, and recollections of legendary local sportsmen and guides, "Hunting and Fishing in the Great Smokies" presents a social history of these activities before the founding of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1934. This classic book by the late Jim Gasque, first published in 1948, offers a period portrait of outdoor life in the Great Smoky Mountains just prior to an era of significant development. The guide covers trout streams and trout fishing, lake fishing and hunting. A new introduction by book author and sportsman Jim Casada provides a profile of Gasque, puts period ethics into perspective and offers Casada's thoughts on fishing in the park today. Thanks to preservation, the streams that Gasque describes still draw sportsmen today. Gasque's tips on prime fly-fishing spots remain up to date for contemporary anglers. Hunting is now prohibited within the park, but in surrounding areas it is still common. Published by UNC Press of Chapel Hill. Softcover, 248 pages, $19.95.

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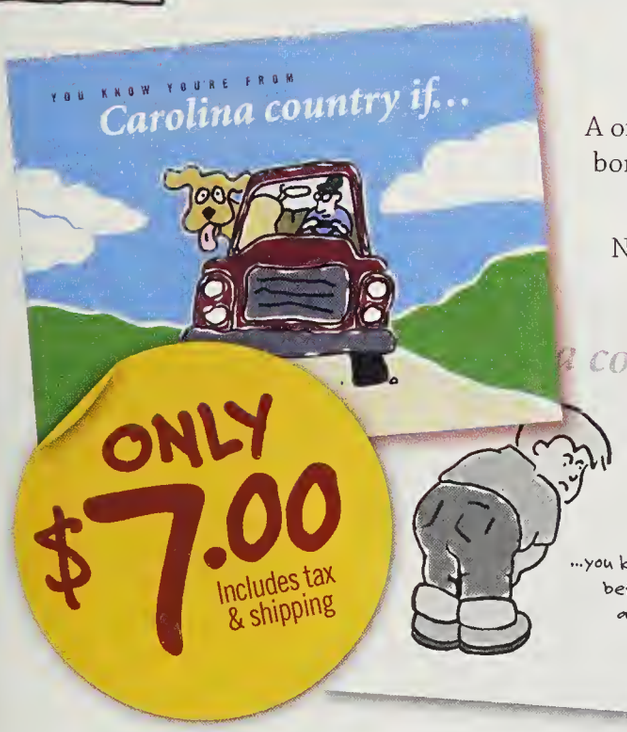

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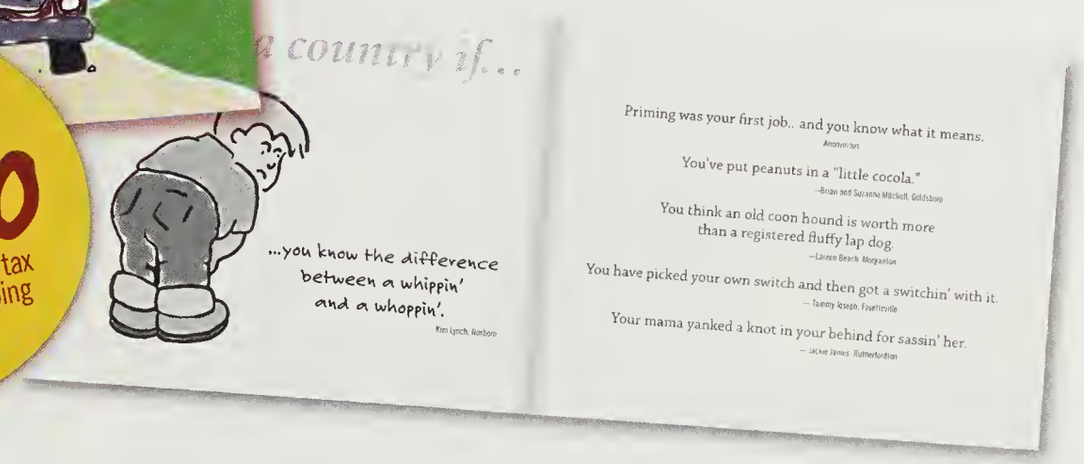
...you know the difference between a whippin' and a whoppin'.
Kim Lynch, Romboro
Priming was your first job.. and you know what it means.
Anonymous
You've put peanuts in a "little cocola."
—Brian and Suzanne Mitchell, Goldsboro
You think an old coon hound is worth more than a registered fluffy lap dog.
—Lavon Beach, Morganton
You have picked your own switch and then got a switchin' with it.
—Tammy Joseph, Fayetteville
Your mama yanked a knot in your behind for sassin' her.
—Jackie James, Rutherfordton

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Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

Getting To Know...

Hugh Morton

Born: February 19, 1921, in Wilmington, N.C.

Known for: Nature conservationist, tourism leader, photographer

Accomplishments: A talented and intrepid lensman, Hugh Morton served as a combat newsreel cameraman in World War II, receiving the Purple Heart and Bronze Star. Upon inheriting Grandfather Mountain in 1952, he extended a road to its top and added the Mile High Swinging Bridge. Morton focused on preserving the mountain, building native wildlife habitats for bears, cougars, white-tail deer and river otters and donating conservation easements for more than 3,000 acres to the Nature Conservancy. His achievements included working as photographer/producer of eight films that won CINE's highest award, the Golden Award, and producing the PBS documentary, "The Search For Clean Air." His long list of civic achievements include receiving the North Carolina Award, the state's highest honor for public service, and the Leadership North Carolina's Governor's Award, and chairing the Governor's Advisory Committee on Travel & Tourism. After Morton died in 2006, his family donated his entire photographic portfolio to the North Carolina Collection of the University of North Carolina Library at Chapel Hill. You can see many of his digitalized photos at www.lib.unc.edu/ncc/pcoll/inv/P0081/P0081.html.

Upcoming Unnatural Resources competition

The Girl Scout Gingerbread House shown below is made out of 98 percent recycled materials and won a trophy at last year's Unnatural Resources Fair in Greenville. The annual event showcases creations and inventions that Eastern Carolina folks make from normally discarded materials. It will be held Friday–Sunday, Feb. 4–6, 2011 at Greenville's Convention Center. Those submitting an entry must live east of I-95, and range in age from kindergarten to senior citizen. Age groups are judged separately, and categories include toys, tools, science, art, history, home use and robots. People should let fair chair Jacqueline Ponder know by Jan. 26 that they will be submitting a project, but projects don't have to be finished until fair time. For more information or to download entry forms, visit www.unnaturalresources.org or call Jacqueline at (252) 355-1039.

Old Salem Museums & Gardens

Field trip: Old Salem

Ongoing student tours: Old Salem in Winston-Salem offers hands-on, museum educator-led Experience Tours for grades 1–8. For descriptions of activities and NC Competency Goals and Objectives, click on the Experience Tour page on its website, www.oldsalem.org. The Self-Guided Historic Salem Town Visit lets students interact with costumed interpretive staff. There's also a Salem Day video about the Moravians, the founding of Salem and early settlers' lives. For reservations, call (800) 441-5305.

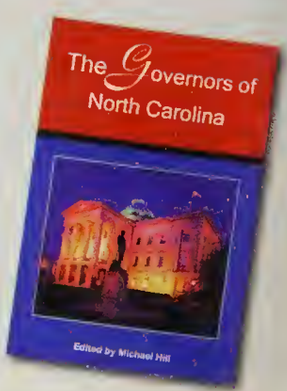
19th-Century Christmas tours: Visitors can take a guided candlelight tour through Old Salem's Historic District where the customs of a 19th century Salem Christmas will be brought to life. The evening tours include music, games, food and drink. Tours are set for Dec. 3, 4, 10, 17, 18 and 23, and booked on a first-come, first-served basis. Call (336) 721-7350 for tour reservations.

Old Salem Museums & Gardens

tar heel lessons
a guide to NC for teachers and students

"The Governors of North Carolina"

From the Roanoke Colonies to the dawn of the 21st century, the story of North Carolina's governors is a prism through which to view Tar Heel history. This book contains biographical sketches of 99 governors, from Ralph Lane up to Michael F. Easley. Arranged alphabetically, the informative biographical sketches are accompanied by pictures or signatures of the governors. Published by N.C. Historical Publications Section of the N.C. Office of Archives and History in Raleigh. Softcover, 211 pages, $20. To order, call (919) 733-7442 or visit www.ncpublications.com.



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$125,000	$624.11	30 YR. Fixed	4.37%	4.56%
$200,000	$998.57	30 YR. Fixed	4.37%	4.53%
$75,000	$557.77	15 YR. Fixed	4.00%	4.51%
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$200,000	$1,468.88	15 YR. Fixed	3.87%	4.19%

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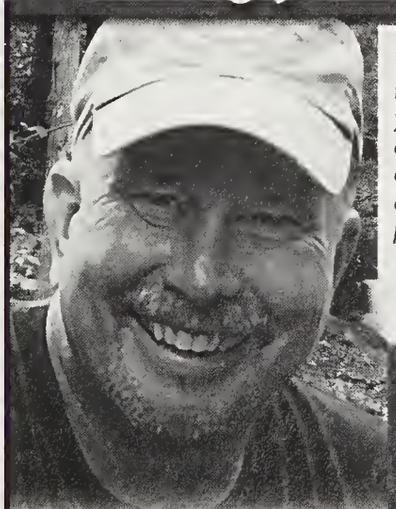

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Oh, Kay!

And then I read

While humpbacks normally migrate along a north to south axis to feed and mate, this one—affectionately called AHWC No. 1363—made the unusual decision to check out a new continent thousands of miles to the east...

The Associated Press

Never mind the affectionate appellation, what is her full name? "**A**nother **H**umpback **W**hale **C**ounted"?

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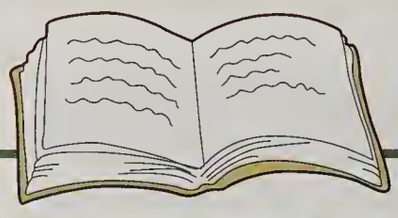
Use the capital letters in the code key below to fill in the blanks above.
"Y O U P R I N T" means
s c r a m b l e



DAFFYNITION

New•Year's•Eve
A fete worse than death.

MATCH BOXES

3	0	5	0	4
H	R	I	R	S
x			2	
			A	

4	6	5	2	7	3	8	1	2
S	M	I	A	T	H	Y	E	A
x							2	
							A	

Each digit in the multiplication problems above stands for the letter below it. Solve the problems and write your answers in the box tops (one digit to each box). Then match boxes to find hidden words in your answers. 9 = C

For answers, please see page 33

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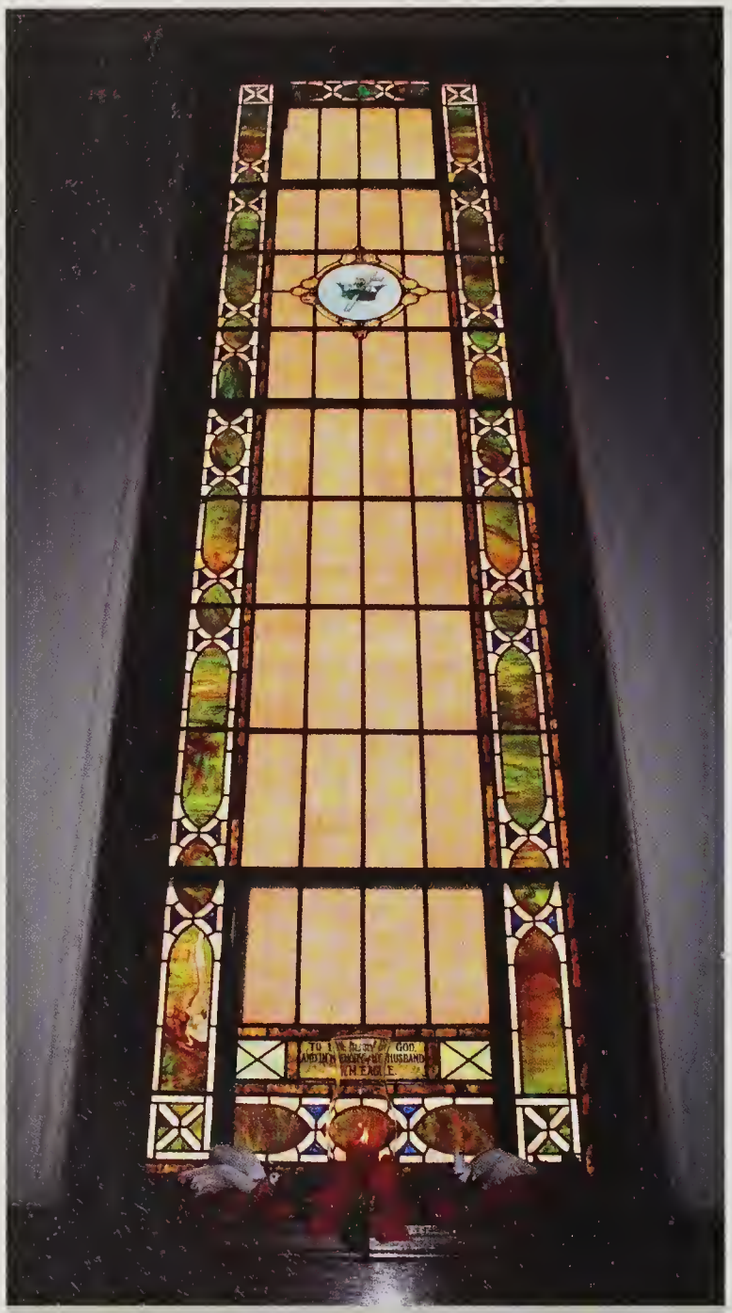
December Events



The third annual Candlelight Tour of Churches will be held in Spencer from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 17. Several churches will offer entertainment. Although the tour is self-guided, trolley rides are available. For details, call (704) 239 3729 or visit www.spencerhometownholidays.com.

ONGOING

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www.theartscouncil.org

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Monday nights
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(828) 693-9708
www.historichendersonville.org

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Tuesday nights
Midway
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Christmas in the Park
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Dec. 8–22, Fayetteville
(910) 433-1547
www.visitfayetteville.nc.com

Tree Fest
Decorated trees, art, holiday crafts,
Through December 30, West Jefferson
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www.ashecountyarts.org

Twelve Days of Christmas
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Handcrafter's Guild Craft Show
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Arts & Crafts Show
Dec. 3–4, Washington
(252) 946-2504

Christmas Candle Tea
Dec. 3–4, Wilmington
(910) 470-1639
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"The Nutcracker"
Dec. 3–5, 10–12, New Bern
(252) 633-9622
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Core Sound Waterfowl Weekend
Dec. 3-5, Harkers Island
(252) 728-1500
www.coresound.com

"She Loves Me"
Family musical
Dec. 3–19, Hickory
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www.hct.org

Christmas by Candlelight Tours
Dec. 3–4, 10, 17–18, 23,
Winston Salem
(336) 721-7350

4 | SAT.

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www.townofpks.com

Christmas Parade
Washington
(252) 944-6570

Flotilla & Hometown Holiday
Washington
(252) 946-3969

Christmas Open House
Bob Timberlake Gallery
Lexington
(336) 249-4428
www.bobtimberlake.com

Christmas Parade
Murphy
(828) 837-6821
www.cherokeecountychamber.com

Craft Show
Hillsborough
(919) 245-3330
www.theshopsatdanielboone.com

A Civil War Christmas At Benton Battlefield
Four Oaks
(910) 594-0789

Holiday Open House
Vineyards of Swan Creek
Ronda
(336) 835-9463
www.raffaldini.com

Core Sound Decoy Festival
Dec. 4–5, Harkers Island
(252) 838-8818
www.decoyguild.com

The 29th annual Edenton Candlelight Christmas Tour takes place December 10–11 and features historic homes and buildings. Call (252) 482-7800 or visit www.edentonhistoricalcommission.org.

"The Nutcracker"
Ballet production
Dec. 4–5, Goldsboro
(919) 922-3231
www.goldsboroballet.com

"Walk To The Stable"
Outdoor Christmas pageant
Dec. 4-5, New Salem
(704) 872-6097

5 | SUN.

Albemarle Chorale Christmas Concert
Elizabeth City
(252) 426-5891

Christmas Parade
Rolesville
(919) 562-7069
www.roleschamber.org

Christmas Parade
Bath
(252) 923-2451

Lee County Choral Society
Holiday concert
(336) 846-2787
www.ashecountyarts.org

Fireside Sale
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John C. Campbell Folk School
Brasstown
(828) 837-2775

Candlelight Tour
Hillsborough
(919) 732-8156
www.candlelighttour.com

9 | THURS.

Candlelight Tour of Homes
Spencer
(704) 239-3729
www.spencerhometownholidays.com

Silver Bells
Candlelight Christmas tour
Dec. 9–10, Murfreesboro
(252) 398-5922
www.murfreesboronc.org

10 | FRI.

Christmas Parade
Roseboro
(910) 525-4121

"The Night Before Christmas Carol"
Touring production
West Jefferson
(336-846-2787
www.ashecountyarts.org

Candlelight Tour
Dec. 10–11, Edenton
(252) 482-7800
www.edentonhistoricalcommission.org

Chris Cringle Area Craft Show
Dec. 10–11, Washington
(252) 946-6208

"The Miscreants' Christmas"
Mystery dinner theatre
Dec. 10–11 & 17–18, New Bern
(252) 229-4977

11 | SAT.

Christmas Parade
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www.visitedenton.com

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www.optoydrop.net

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www.polk.nchistoricsites.org

Christmas Candlelight Tour
Beaufort
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www.beauforthistoricsite.org

Christmas Open House
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www.harmonyhallnc.com

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www.cardscraps.com

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(252) 636-0202

Holiday House Tour
Dec. 11–12, Chapel Hill
(919) 942-7818
www.chapelhillpreservation.com

Christmas Candlelight
Dec. 11 & 18, Tryon Palace
New Bern
(252) 512-4937
www.tryonpalace.org

12 | SUN.

Albemarle Chorale Christmas Concert
Edenton
(252) 426-5891

Christmas Open House
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13 | MON.

Period Holiday Decorations Workshop
Edenton
(252) 482-2637
www.visitedenton.com

14 | TUES.

Mistletoe River Roving
Pontoon boat tour
Washington
(252) 948-0000

15 | WED.

Holiday Pops
North Carolina Symphony
Tarboro
(252) 823-5166

17 | FRI.

Candlelight Tour of Churches
Trolley rides, Spencer
(704) 239-3729
www.spencerhometownholidays.com

21 | TUES.

"Twas the Day before Christmas"
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www.tryonpalace.org

31 | FRI.

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GO ONLINE

Operation Toy Drop

Fort Bragg's Airborne operations, visiting paratroopers and charities prepare for this year's opportunity to help

The public is welcome to watch the Operation Toy Drop airborne activities on Saturday, Dec. 11, at Fort Bragg. For more information visit www.optoydrop.net.

Dozens of parachute silhouettes raining down against the North Carolina sky are nothing out of the ordinary around Fort Bragg and Cumberland County, but each December since 1998, Airborne operations have taken on a different meaning to America's men and women in uniform with the Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop. An annual opportunity for Fort Bragg's military community to help families in need over the holidays, Operation Toy Drop combines the efforts of Army, Air Force and civilian service organizations for the holiday season event.

Operation Toy Drop is a week-long project where Fort Bragg's paratroopers (or visiting paratroopers from across the U.S.) and the region's Air Force bases, including those at Charlotte and Charleston, individually contribute new, unwrapped toys to be distributed to local children's homes and social service agencies. Despite the project's name, these toys are not "dropped" anywhere except into the arms of deserving children throughout the region.

The drop is actually a daytime, non-tactical airborne operation supervised by foreign military jumpmasters—a rare treat for participating soldiers who relish the opportunity to earn a foreign nation's "jump wings."

The beginnings

In 1998, then-Staff Sgt. Randy Oler envisioned incorporating Airborne operations, foreign military jumpmasters and local charities for the operation. After given the green light by U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (USACAPOC(A)), Oler that December saw the first Operation Toy Drop completed on a wing, a prayer, and Oler's handshakes across several organizations.

Operation Toy Drop expanded to include aircraft support from Pope Air Force Base's 43rd Airlift Wing, and welcomed the participation of soldiers from Fort Bragg's XVIII Airborne Corps and 82nd Airborne Division. This year the operation has expanded to include Charleston Air Force Base—which has challenged Fort Bragg to see who can raise the most toys.

Each Operation Toy Drop has brought in more toys for children in need. Even as USACAPOC(A) soldiers mobilized with the rest of the military community in support of the Global War on Terrorism, those who remained stateside continued the tradition. In 2001, each child who lost a family member in the Sept. 11 attacks received a toy raised in the following December's Operation Toy Drop. As the war broke out, Oler remained at the helm of the operation. By April of 2004, he'd been promoted to Sgt. 1st Class. Even as the USACAPOC(A) commanding general was fighting Oler's relocation orders, which would take him away from Fort Bragg, Oler was starting to get the ball rolling for Operation Toy Drop, 2004, which was less than eight months away.

Oler had warned his colleagues that he might not be around for what would have been his seventh year running Operation Toy Drop. Sadly, he was right, but not due to any relocation orders. On April 20, 2004, Sgt. 1st Class Randall R. Oler suffered a heart attack while performing jumpmaster duties aboard a C-130 aircraft. At 43 years old, Oler was pronounced dead at Womack Army Medical Center. The Tennessee native had joined the Army in 1979 as an infantryman, spending time in Ranger and Special Forces battalions throughout his career, and had deployed in support of various overseas operations.

Today's Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop has collected and distributed over 45,000 toys—from bikes, to dolls, to video game systems—for local families and children in need.

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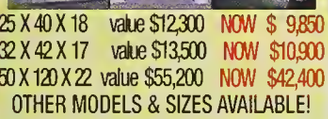

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By Arnie Katz

Ceilings fans: Which way should they turn?

We have ceiling fans in every room in the house, and every year my husband and I argue about whether to reverse the fans and use them during the winter. My husband has gone on the Web and read articles explaining that reversing the fans will cause them to push warm air from the ceilings down toward the floor, giving us more warmth. To me, it would make more sense to run the fans blowing down, like we do in the summer, to pull the air down from the ceilings. Who's right?

First, if this is all you have to argue about, let me offer my congratulations on having such a wonderful marriage. A lot of couples generate more heat arguing about all kinds of things than will ever be saved by a ceiling fan.

The short answer is that both of you are right, and neither of you is right. Let me explain. Fans cool you in the summer by moving air over your body, helping increase evaporation of moisture from the skin. The technical term for this is "sweating," which is the primary way our bodies cool themselves. When we sweat, excess heat gets carried away.

Air moving over our bodies also carries heat away, so we not only feel cooler, we actually are cooler. In the summer, if a breeze from the ocean or a ceiling fan is blowing on us, we'll be cooler and can be more comfortable at a higher temperature. If the house is air conditioned, we can turn the thermostat up a couple of degrees, so the air conditioner will run less, and we will be just as comfortable.

For this to save you money in warm weather, you have to do two things: 1) only run the fan when there are people in the room; and 2) turn the thermostat up. The higher you set the thermostat the more you'll save; so experiment with what works in your house.

In the winter, air blowing on your body has the same effect as in the summer—it will cool you. So, blowing air down on the people is probably not a good idea. It will often cause you to crank up the thermostat on the heater in order to be comfortable.

So, some people recommend reversing the fans in the winter and running them on low speed to help "mix" the air in the room. This minimizes the drafty feeling. The theory is that warm air collects at the top of the room and by gently circulating that warm air, you can even out the temperatures and get more of the heat you paid for down where it does you some good.

The research that has been done tends to show little, if any, winter energy savings from ceiling fans.

There's been very little research on whether this actually works, and the research that has been done tends to show little, if any, winter energy savings from ceiling fans. And, don't forget, the fans themselves use energy.

In some houses, if there is a big difference in temperature from floor to ceiling, it's more likely that running the fan will help, but every house is different. The best advice I can give is to try an experiment in your house. Set the thermostat wherever you need it to make you comfortable. Then turn the fans on (reversed, moving air up) for a few days and see if you can still be comfortable with the thermostat setting a couple of degrees lower.

Next, go for a few days and see if the lower setting is okay even without the fans. Go through a few cycles of this, and see what happens. And, of course, don't tell the rest of the family this experiment is going on. Just do it, and observe if they notice. If you can turn the thermostat down this winter and your loved ones don't notice, then everybody wins.

Arnie Katz is director of training and senior building science consultant at Advanced Energy in Raleigh (www.advancedenergy.org). Send your home energy questions to editor@carolinacountry.com

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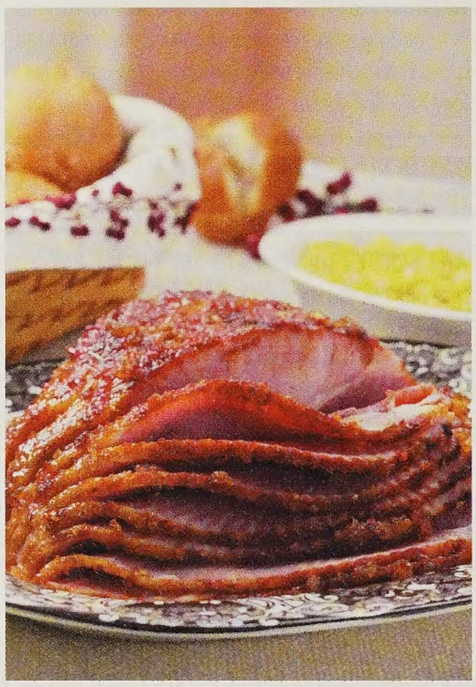
Maple-Topped Sweet Potato Skins

- 6 sweet potatoes
- ½ cup cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 2 teaspoon cinnamon, divided
- 2 teaspoon nutmeg, divided
- 2 teaspoon ground ginger, divided
- 2 cups chopped walnuts or pecans
- 3 tablespoons butter, softened
- ¼ cup brown sugar, packed
- **Garnish:** warm maple syrup, additional nuts

Pierce potatoes with a fork. Bake at 400 degrees or microwave on high setting until tender; cool. Slice each potato in half lengthwise; scoop out baked insides, keeping skins intact. Place potato skins on an ungreased baking sheet. Mash baked potato in a bowl until smooth; add cream cheese, sour cream and one teaspoon each of spices. Mix well and spoon into potato skins. In a bowl, mix nuts, butter, brown sugar and remaining spices; sprinkle over top. Bake at 400 degrees for 15 minutes. Drizzle with warm maple syrup; garnish as desired.

Makes one dozen



Fire & Spice Baked Ham

5½ to 6 pound fully-cooked ham half

- ½ cup red pepper jelly
- ½ cup pineapple preserves
- ¼ cup brown sugar, packed
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves

Trim off rind and excess fat from ham; score fat in a diamond pattern. Place ham on a broiler pan sprayed with non-stick vegetable spray. Combine remaining ingredients in a small saucepan over low heat, stirring with a whisk until well blended. Brush ⅓ of jelly mixture over ham. Bake uncovered, at 425 degrees for 5 minutes. Turn down oven temperature to 325 degrees. Bake ham for an additional 45 minutes, basting with remaining jelly mixture every 15 minutes. Transfer ham to a serving platter; let stand for 15 minutes before slicing.

Makes 8 to 10 servings

Mee-Mee's Berry Gelatin

- 3.4 ounce package raspberry gelatin mix
- 3.4 ounce package lemon gelatin mix
- 2 cups boiling water
- 10 ounce package frozen raspberries, thawed
- 1 cup whole berry cranberry sauce
- 8 ounce can crushed pineapple, drained
- 1 cup lemon lime soda

In a bowl, dissolve gelatin mixes in boiling water; stir well. Add raspberries and cranberry sauce; mix well. Stir in pineapple. Let cool briefly. Add soda; pour into a 9-by-9-inch serving dish and refrigerate until set. Spread topping over gelatin; cut into squares.

Serves 6 to 9

Vanilla topping

- ¼ cup instant vanilla pudding mix
- 1 cup milk
- 2 cups frozen whipped topping, thawed

Whisk together pudding mix and milk for 2 minutes; fold in topping.

From Your Kitchen

Baked Brie

- 1 can of fat-free crescent rolls
- Sugar-free raspberry Jam (enough to cover block of brie)
- 1 block of brie (about 12 ounces)

Preheat oven to 375. Carefully roll crescent rolls out onto ungreased cookie sheet. Make sure they stick together and make a flat sheet. Place brie in the center of the rolls. Cover brie with raspberry jam (coating the sides and the top generously). Fold crescent rolls up over the brie until the brie is covered. Bake for 13 minutes or until crescent rolls are golden brown. Serve with crackers.

Makes 8 servings

Morgan Lashley of Raleigh will receive $25 for submitting this recipe.

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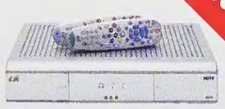
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Sample Monthly Rates per 1,000*

Issue Age	Male (non-tobacco)	Female (non-tobacco)
5	$ .55	$ .55
15	$ .59	$ .55
35	$ 1.30	$ 1.08
55	$ 3.20	$ 2.53
65	$ 5.36	$ 4.14
75	$10.23	$ 7.64
85	$19.77	$16.52

* Does not include $36 policy fee, minimums may apply

Sample Monthly Rates per 1,000*

Issue Age	Male (tobacco)	Female (tobacco)
5	N/A	N/A
15	N/A	N/A
35	$ 1.79	$ 1.49
55	$ 4.30	$ 3.55
65	$ 7.18	$ 5.41
75	$13.24	$ 8.85
85	$26.26	$17.67

* Does not include $36 policy fee, minimums may apply

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